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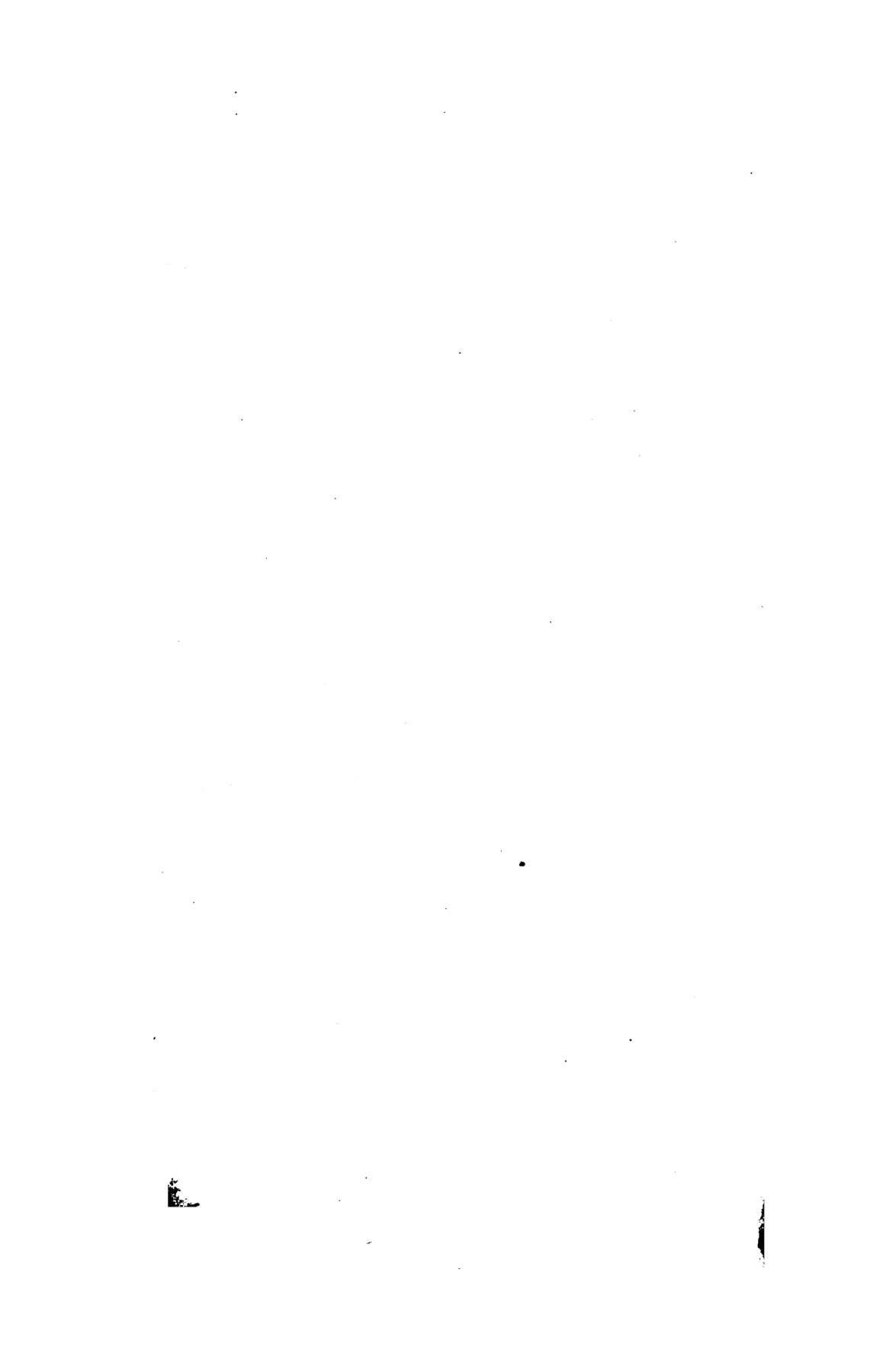






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THE DOCTRINES  
*of*  
HEATHEN PHILOSOPHY  
COMPARED WITH THOSE  
*of*  
REVELATION.

Priestley



THE DOCTRINES  
*of*  
HEATHEN PHILOSOPHY,  
*compared*  
WITH THOSE OF  
REVELATION.

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BY JOSEPH PRIESTLEY, L. L. D. F. R. S.

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1804.

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*Thos. P. Ennis*  
*Lawrence*

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## DEDICATION.

TO THE  
REVEREND JOSEPH BERINGTON,  
*a Catholic Priest in England,*  
AND TO THE  
RIGHT REVEREND WILLIAM WHITE,  
*a Bishop of the Episcopal Church in the  
United States.*

GENTLEMEN,

YOU will, I doubt not, be surprized at my dedication of any work of mine to you, differing so much as we do in our sentiments concerning christianity. But, entertaining the highest respect for your characters, as men and as christians, I do it *because* we differ; to shew, with respect to a subject in which we are equally interested, as in that of this work that I regard all that bear the christian name, how widely distant soever their different

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churches



churches and creeds may be, as friends and brethren, and therefore entitled, by the express direction of our common Saviour, to particular respect and attention as such.

Though few persons have written more than myself to controvert the established principles of each of your churches, I consider the articles in which we all agree as of infinitely more moment than those with respect to which we differ. We all believe in the being, the perfections, the universal providence, and the righteous moral government of God, as the maker and sovereign disposer of all things. Whatever we may think of the person of Christ, we all believe that his doctrine is divine, and his precepts obligatory upon all. We all believe in his miracles, his death, his resurrection, and his ascension, as related in the books of the New Testament. We also all believe that he will come again, to raise all the dead, to judge the world, and to give to every man according to his works; and these are all the articles of faith that can have any considerable influence on the lives and conduct of men. Believing this, our gratitude for the communication of knowledge of such infinite importance must be common to us all, and such as should  
lead

lead to a chearful obedience to all the commands of God.

I know that the creeds of both your established churches doom me, and all that are out of their pale, as discarding some particular articles of your faith, to *perish everlastingly*, notwithstanding every thing that we may believe, or do. But I know that the candid and liberal of all persuasions are provided with some salvo for the conscientious heretic. But whatever may be your opinion with respect to me, which I know will be as favourable as you can make it, I have no doubt but, if I ever do get to heaven, I shall meet with both of you there. In that state our minds will be so much enlightened, that the bigotry which has contributed so much to the miseries of this life, but which has, at the same time, been a valuable exercise of christian candour, will no longer exist. With respect to myself, the time in which every thing of this kind will be cleared up, and no doubt to universal satisfaction, cannot be very distant ; and the difference between my opinion, that it will be after an interval of rest in the grave, and yours that it will take place with respect to each individual immediately after his death, cannot be thought of much moment, by those who believe they shall live for ever after it.

a iii.

With

With the highest esteem for your personal characters, though you are probably unknown to each other.

I am Gentlemen,

Your brother in the faith,

and hope of the Gospel.

J. PRIESTLEY.

Northumberland 1804.

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## P R E F A C E.

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WHEN I wrote the Pamphlet entitled *Socrates and Jesus Compared*, which I was led to do from the perusal of Xenophon's *Memorabilia*, in order to form a more distinct idea than I then retained of the subjects and the manner of the teaching of Socrates, and from seeing his character in a different light from that in which it had been usually represented, I had no thoughts of doing any thing more in the same way. But my friends in general approving of the pamphlet, and seeing in the same light with myself the great superiority which it exhibited of the character and teaching of Jesus to that of this most moral, and most celebrated, of all the Grecian philosophers, I was urged to give a similar view of all the Grecian moralists, comparing their principles with those of revelation in general.

At first this appeared to me too great an undertaking at my age, and with increasing infirmities. But finding that my library, notwithstanding the  
a iv.                      destruction

destruction of a great part of it at the riots in Birmingham, was so far restored as to contain almost every book that I wanted for the purpose, having a predilection for the work, and abundant leisure in my present retired situation, I reperused the writings of all the Grecian moralists that have come to us, making all the extracts that I thought necessary, and then composed the different parts of the work with which I now present the reader; It was however not done in the order in which they are now arranged, but as they appeared to me of the most importance, giving directions to my son, that if I died before the work was compleated, he would publish what I had finished; having taken the precaution to transcribe, and prepare for the press, each of the separate parts before I undertook any other. In this manner, with much more ease, and I will add, more to my satisfaction, than I expected, I compleated my design.

My labour was the shorter, as I had nothing to do with the logic, the metaphysics, or the physics, of the writers all equally trifling and absurd, but only with such passages in their writings as related to the being, the attributes, and the providence of God, their sentiments concerning the human soul, and especially its destination after death, and their  
general

general principles of morals. For with these subjects only could they be brought into comparison with the doctrines of the scriptures. Also, my comparison extended no farther than till christianity became the religion of the Roman Emperors. For after this the tenets of the philosophers and those of the christians were strangely mixed, so that it might be said they borrowed from each other. I have therefore confined myself to the period in which they were entirely separate. For though after the promulgation of christianity the heathen philosophers had sufficient opportunity of acquainting themselves with its principles, they appear to have been entirely ignorant of them, or to have given little attention to them. This appears to me to have been the case with Marcus Antoninus, and others who lived long enough after the time of Christ. If they had any knowledge of christian principles, their bias was rather against than in favour of them.

There are several subdivisions of the Grecian philosophers which I have not noticed, but they were such as made only some small variation in some of the general systems of which I have given a particular account. The most considerable of them were Sceptics, and the Academics; but they

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advanced

advanced nothing new, and only doubted, and disputed, in different ways about the positions of others. For a more particular account of all the Grecian philosophers than it was to my purpose to give, I refer the reader to the excellent *History of Philosophy* by Dr. Enfield, most judiciously compiled from the elaborate work of Brucker. As the sentiments of the Grecian philosophers have been represented very differently, by writers who had different views in characterizing them, I thought it necessary to give numerous extracts from their own works; so that the reader may be confident that I have not made any mistake of importance in my account of them.

I once thought of adding another part, on the sentiments of Cicero, for though he was the founder of no sect, he was well acquainted with the principles of them all, and no doubt made his selection of those which he most approved. But besides that there is nothing of his own in any thing he has advanced on the several subjects, it is not easy to ascertain what his real sentiments were. His preference may in general be pretty well distinguished among the different speakers in his dialogues; but it was too great an object with him to embellish whatever he undertook to defend; so that

that there is often more of the orator, than of the philosopher, even in his philosophical works.

I can by no means persuade myself to think so highly of the religious sentiments of Cicero, and of their having been the real principles of his conduct, as Dr. Middleton does. He gives him every thing that is most essential in christianity, or what was by himself thought to be so ; and among the rest a belief in the immortality of the soul, and its separate existence in a state of happiness or misery after death ; whereas he expressly says there could hardly be found a foolish old woman who feared what had formerly been believed of the dreadful things in the shades below. *De Natura deorum.* (Lib. ii. cap. 2.) Yet on this subject, among others, Middleton says. (*Life of Cicero Vol. iii. p 240.*) “ that Cicero has largely and “ clearly declared his mind in many parts, of his “ writings.” Any person, however, may see in Dr. Middleton’s work a large account of what is contained in the writings of Cicero on this subject ; and to this elaborate, entertaining, and truly valuable work I refer the reader.

I have little doubt, but that the opinion expressed by Cæsar, in his speech, as given by Sallust, in  
the



the debate concerning the punishment of the Associates of Cataline, was that which was maintained by the senators in general, and all persons of rank and education at Rome; as it was not delivered by Cæsar as his own in particular, but evidently as what he apprehended would be that from which his hearers would not dissent. Cato, who spake after him, did not express any disapprobation of what he had said. Indeed as a stoic, he could not. Cicero himself was present, and did not contradict him. "In sorrow and distress," Cæsar said, "Death is a state of rest from all trouble; and not of torment. It puts an end to all the evils to which men are subject, and beyond it there is no room for care or joy."

The result of the whole of this work, even to the most superficial observer, must be a sense of the infinite superiority of the doctrines of Revelation, and especially of those of christianity, to those of any heathen system whatever; and with this great advantage, that the principles of revelation are perfectly intelligible to the bulk of mankind, and the same with those which actually influence men in the common conduct of life; giving them a knowledge of what they have to hope from the practice of virtue, and what they have to fear in  
consequence.

consequence of vice. Moreover, these rules of life, coming immediately from the author of their being, have a great advantage in point of weight, and authority, far more than any mere reasoning, though ever so clear and satisfactory, could have given them.

Accordingly, the precepts of Moses were not, like the teachings of the Greek philosophers, confined to a few, but calculated for the use of the whole nation, the lowest as much as the highest among them. The doctrines and precepts of christianity are also equally intelligible to all mankind ; and they are represented as of equal importance and concern to all, the slave as much as his master. Such a plan of general instruction was never practiced, nor, as far as appears, did the very idea of it ever occur to any of the Greek moralists. The lectures of the philosophers were given to select disciples, who generally paid for their instruction. With the common people they had nothing to do, while at the same time they encouraged them in their absurd and abominable religious rites, founded on that polytheism and idolatry which they themselves held in contempt ; and this was founded on as groundless an opinion as any that was ever entertained by the lowest of the people,

ple, viz. that the welfare of the state depended upon the observance of them.

The attention I have given to this subject has increased the sense I had before of the great value of revelation to the virtue and happiness of mankind, and my gratitude to the universal parent, that I was born in a christian country, and in an age so much enlightened as the present. I rejoice also that I have been led, in the course of his providence, to do so much as I have done towards illustrating and defending the evidences of revelation, and towards purging it from those doctrines and practices which were discordant with it, and prevented its reception with many. I am willing to think that my *comparison of the institutions of the Hindoos, and other antient nations, with those of Moses*, and this work, which extends the comparison to all the sects of the Grecian philosophers, will eminently contribute to this end. Lastly, I am thankful to the author of my being that my life has been prolonged so far as to have been able to compleat my design. I could not have closed my life with more satisfaction than after a work of this kind. May the great Lord of the harvest send more, more zealous, and more able, labourers into his harvest.

THE  
PRINCIPLES OF THE GRECIAN  
PHILOSOPHY.  
[PART I.]

---

ON  
THE STATE OF RELIGIOUS AND MORAL PRIN-  
CIPLES IN GREECE BEFORE THE  
TIME OF PYTHAGORAS.

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*INTRODUCTION.*

**I**N comparing the moral maxims of the heathen world with those of revelation, which is the object of this work, it is desirable to go as far back as we can, with any sufficient evidence, of what men really thought and did; and though with respect to Greece we cannot go so far back as we can with respect to Hindostan, and other oriental nations, we have two early writers on whom we may depend, viz. the poets HESIOD and HOMER; and they flourished, according to Newton, about eight hundred years before the christian æra:

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We have also a poem of considerable length, containing precepts for the conduct of life, by THEOGNIS, which does not appear to have suffered by interpolation; and he flourished more than four hundred years before Christ; and also a shorter poem of PHOCYLIDES of the same age, thought by some to contain christian sentiments, and therefore to have been interpolated; we have also a collection of sayings of those who are generally called *the seven wise men of Greece*, who lived about six hundred years before Christ, preserved by Diogenes Laertius. Though all these are not of equal authority, I shall quote nothing from any of them but what will appear, by a comparison with others the antiquity of which is unquestionable, to be sufficiently to my purpose.

It is something remarkable that, near as Greece is to Palestine and Egypt, not only all *science*, properly so called, but a knowledge of the common and most useful *arts*, seems to have been unknown for ages in that country, till they were brought to them by the Phenicians or Egyptians, who came among them to find settlements, after flying from their own countries, and who found them in a state of the greatest barbarism, and divided into a great number

number of *clans* ; for *nations* or *states* they did not deserve to be called ; and in a state of hostility with each other, as mankind in a similar situation are always found to be.

These wandering tribes of Greece, similar to those in North America at present (for they were a long time in no better, but rather in a worse state with respect to civilization,) must no doubt, have had some notions of religion ; since no people in the world have been intirely without them ; but what they were in that rude state of the country it is impossible to trace. The sacred rites and modes of worship that we find accounts of in their writers were acknowledged to have been borrowed from Egypt, and other countries. And even *this* was in so early a period, before they had any writers, that the observance of them had been from time immemorial ; so that the veneration they had acquired from their antiquity was not to be shaken.

Whatever they were, and they were different in every part of the country, and more or less in every different town and hamlet, they were supposed to be connected with the well-being of the place ; so that it would have been thought hazardous to make any change in them. Nor do we find that this was

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ever

ever done in any heathen country. They might adopt new gods, and new modes of worship, but they never abandoned their own antient ones.

This partial civilization of Greece must have been a considerable time after the greatest part of the knowledge derived from revelation had been lost in the East, as will be evident to any person who compares what he finds on this subject in the earliest of the Greek writers with the book of Job, to say nothing of the writings of Moses. Job and his friends, though probably not themselves favoured with any revelation, appear to have had a clear knowledge of the being, and the righteous government of the one true God, the maker of the world, and of all things in it, and also of a future state of righteous retribution. At least so it clearly appears to me, though of late, and only of late, some christian writers have questioned this. But how miserably bewildered were the wisest of the Greeks with respect to these subjects. Of the knowledge of a future state, on the only principle of reason, as well as revelation, viz. that of a proper *resurrection*, we do not perceive the least trace among them. Instead of this, they had adopted a notion of a *separate soul*, or a *ghost*, descending after death into a region

region below the surface of the earth, and the most absurd fables relating to their condition there ; though these, do not appear to have had any credit with the writers, nor probably with any persons of much thought and reflection among them.



## SECTION I.

*Of the Obligation to the Worship of the Gods in general.*

The general and established opinion of a superior power, or powers, governing the affairs of the world and of men, and the obligation that men were under to worship them, according to the customary rites of each people, was universal. And this was not only the persuasion of the vulgar, but of all the writers without any exception. In a later period it is probable enough that what several of the writers advance on this subject might arise from a wish not to shock the prejudices of the populace ; but with respect to the period of which I am now treating, there seems to be no reason to doubt of their sincerity ; the precepts on this subject are so numerous, and urged in so emphatical a manner by them all. The obligation to worship the gods is urged by So-

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lon,



More especially, Jupiter, and the gods in general, are represented as offended at *perjury*, and determined to punish it. "The immortal gods," says Phocylides (v. 15.) "hate a false oath, whoever takes it." And Theognis says, "never swear that any thing shall not be; for the gods are angry at it." (v. 659.) In Homer Jupiter is frequently appealed to for the observance of oaths, and requested to punish the guilty, (*Iliad*, Lib. III. v. 321.) Talthybias calls to witness in the first place Jupiter, stiled on this occasion, by the remarkable character of *the greatest and the best*, then the sun, the earth, and the furies, who he says punish the perjured under the earth, (*Iliad*, Lib. XIX. v. 257.)

Other vices are occasionally mentioned as incurring the indignation of Jupiter. "Father Jupiter will not favour a liar" (*Iliad*, Lib. IV. v. 235.) "May the celestial gods," says Theognis (v. 850.) "destroy the man that shall by smooth speeches deceive his friend." Hesiod says (*On Works*, Lib. I. v. 329.) "He who deceives the orphan, or abuses his aged parents, Jupiter is certainly angry with him, and at the last he will give an account of all his unjust actions." In Homer Menelaus

laos prays that "Jupiter may give him to punish  
" the wicked Alexander, that hereafter all men may  
" dread to injure a person who has received them  
" with kindness." (Iliad, Lib. III. v. 11.) Chi-  
lon being asked what Jupiter was doing, said,  
" He is humbling the proud and exalting the hum-  
" ble."

No Jew or Christian could appeal with more confidence to the justice and equity of the true God than these persons do to their Jupiter. It is evident, therefore, that, whatever name they gave this object of their worship they had the same idea of his general character; and this must have been derived from the same source. The belief of a righteous governor of the world appears never to have been wholly abandoned by mankind. Though the name was changed, and multiplicity took the place of unity, what was most essential to the righteous administration of affairs was, in a considerable degree, though accompanied with much superstition, retained. The heathens were deficient chiefly in their ignorance of a future state, in which the seeming irregularities, and many unaccountable appearances in this life, will be rectified to universal satisfaction.

## SECTION V.

*Of the Influence of the Fates.*

It is something remarkable that, notwithstanding the omnipotence which the heathens ascribed to their gods, and their control over the affairs of men, they had an idea of a power which the gods themselves either could not, or did not chuse to oppose. This was *Fate*, or *the Fates*. And yet this was a divinity to which they never ascribed any degree of wisdom.

According to Hesiod, the Fates were the daughters of Jupiter, and he gave them this extraordinary power. "Jupiter" (and whom on this occasion he styles "*the wise*, μητιετα) produced the Parcæ (μορῶν) Clotho, Lachesis, and Atropos, to whom "he gave the greatest honour, who distribute good "and evil to mortal men," Theognis v. 905. But in another place of the same poem (v. 211) he says that, "Night produced odious Fate (χηρα) "and the black Parcæ (σαρκομ) and death, without "the concurrence of any deity—— and the fatal "goddesses, and cruel Parcæ, Clotho, Lachesis, "and

“and Atropos, who appoint good and evil to men  
 “that are born, who revenging the offences of men  
 “and gods, never remit of their anger till they have  
 punished the offender.” Here the same powers  
 have a different origin, and are altogether independent of Jupiter, or any of the gods, and superior to them all.

Besides the sovereign power over life and death, and external advantages of every kind, the affections and characters of men are sometimes ascribed to these fates. “The Fates,” says Homer, (*Iliad*, Lib. XXIV. v. 49.) “give a patient mind to man.” However, with respect to the important article of life or death, their decision was never violated; and the time, and all the circumstances, of a man’s death were determined by them, as well as the death itself. Thus Neptune assures Achilles, who knew that he was never to return from the siege of Troy, that it was not his fate to be drowned in the river, when he apprehended that he was in great danger from it. (*Iliad*, Lib. XXI. v. 291.) He wishes that he might die by the hand of Hector, a brave man, but he knew that he should fall by a less noble hand. (*Iliad*, Lib. XXI. v. 278.)

Whatever the gods might wish, they never fail.

ed to acquiesce in the known decision of the fates. Achilles, lamenting his destiny, says that "Hercules, though most dear to Jupiter, was conquered by Fate, and the anger of Juno" (*Iliad*, Lib. XVIII. v. 118.) "It was in the fates," he says, (*Iliad*. Lib. XVIII. v. 328.) "that two friends of his should die before Troy, as well as that he was not to return to Greece." It was one of the sayings of Pittacus. "The Gods cannot oppose Fate."

On several occasions the gods express some degree of fear lest the orders of the fates should be violated. Neptune, expressing his regard for Æneas, advises him not to fight before the death of Achilles (*Iliad*, Lib. XX. v. 336.) though he knew that it was not in the fates that he should die by his hand. Both Apollo and Jupiter express their concern lest the Greeks should take Troy before the time ordained by the fates. (*Iliad*, Lib. XXI. v. 516. XX. v. 30.)

On some occasions Jupiter, who is said to have given this great power to the fates, seems to think it was in his power to control them, and to have been half inclined to do it; but he yielded to the remonstrances of the other gods, who opposed  
his

his resolution. When Hector was driven by Achilles round the walls of Troy, Jupiter expressed an inclination to save him from death. But Minerva says to him, (*Iliad*, Lib. XXII. v. 180.) "Would you deliver from death a mortal man, destined to die by the fates? Do what you please, but we, the rest of the gods, will not give our consent." He acknowledged that it was in the fates that Sarpedon should die by the hand of Patroclus, and wished to convey him to a place of safety; but Juno expostulating with him on the subject, he acquiesced. (*Iliad*, Lib. XVI. v. 432.) The independence of the decision of these fates on the will of the gods seems not to have been a fixed principle. For Ulysses, speaking to Tiresias, in the Elysian fields says, according to Homer, (*Odyssey*, Lib. XI. v. 138.) "Perhaps the gods themselves have decreed these things. (*ἵπτε κλωσάν*)" At what time this decision of the fates was made, is not said in these writers; but it was commonly supposed to be at the birth of every particular person. It was, however, considered as so irrevocable, that these fates, though goddesses, were never prayed to, it being taken for granted that whatever they had advanced it would never be altered.

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There was another celestial power acknowledged by the Greeks, but seemingly not so early as the times of Hesiod and Homer, as they make no mention of her. This was *Fortune*. For whatever was afterwards ascribed to her, is by him, and all the other writers that I have quoted, ascribed to Jupiter, or some other of the gods.

Neither of these powers are, however, known in the scriptures. According to them, every thing in the world, life and death, riches and poverty, success, or the want of it, in war, and undertakings of any other kind, are ascribed to the providence of that *one God*, who created and governs all things, and whose will, independently of any such powers as those of Fate or Fortune, decides upon every thing. To him we are taught to look for every thing, as being wholly dependant upon him, and accountable to him. This frees the mind from that perplexity, to which the wisest of the heathens must have been subject, while they had any apprehension of this *blind fate* to which, whether willingly or unwillingly, their gods themselves, without excepting even Jupiter, submitted.

## SECTION VI.

*Of Moral Duties, and also of Death and the Consequences of it.*

Almost all the writers that I have quoted in this part of my work deliver excellent precepts both respecting *morals* properly so called, and the prudent conduct of life, similar to the *Proverbs of Solomon*, to which they will often well bear to be compared. Many parts of Hesiods poem *On Works*, and the sentences of Theognis, are particularly valuable on this account, though the superstition of the former, or rather that of the age and the country in which he lived, as appears in the second part of the poem viz. *On Days*, is extreme.

On the subject of *death*, and its consequences, there is a remarkable silence in all the serious writers of this period. The knowledge of the doctrine of a resurrection was completely lost, but there are traces of a belief that the soul survives the grave, though not of any state of righteous retribution, in which the righteous will be rewarded, and the wicked punished for their actions here, ex-



cept in those fables of Homer concerning the state of ghosts in tartarus and elysium, probably not seriously believed by himself; so that the great sanction of virtue, familiar to Jews and Christians was unknown to them.

In Phocylides are some sentences which express a clear belief of souls surviving the grave. "Immortal souls," he says (v. 110.) "free from old age, live for ever. All the dead are equal," (v. 105.) "but God governs souls. We hope to see the remains of the dead come out of the earth into light, after which they will be gods. For incorruptible Souls remain in the dead. The spirit is the image of God given to mortals," (v. 100.) According to this the soul continues attached to the body some time after it is dead, which was the opinion of the Egyptians, and the cause, as it is thought of their endeavouring to preserve the bodies so long by embalming them, and keeping them in their houses.

After the perusal of this, how happy ought we to think ourselves for enjoying the glorious light of the Gospel, by which, and by which alone, *life and immortality are brought to light*. Without this light, *the wisdom of the world* availed but little to the mo-

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ral improvement and happiness of man. And as we proceed we shall find no increase of light, but rather of darkness, with respect to this subject.

O F  
THE PHILOSOPHY  
*of*  
PYTHAGORAS.

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*INTRODUCTION.*

**P**YTHAGORAS appears to have been the first of all the Greeks who gave his whole time to philosophy either in the acquisition of knowledge or in the communication of it to others. He is said to have been a native of Samos, and after having had some instruction from Pherecydes of Scyros, (of whom little is known, except that he had some knowledge of Oriental philosophy,) he went to Egypt; where, having the patronage of the king Amasis, he obtained leave to be initiated into the religion and philosophy of the Egyptians. The priests made him undergo a very severe discipline, including circumcision, but he submitted to every thing they enjoined; and, continuing in the country twenty two years, may be presumed to have acquired all the know-

knowledge that could be obtained there. Finding on his return no sufficient encouragement, in his endeavours to open a school of philosophy in his own country, he finally settled at Crotona, in that part of Italy which, in consequence of having been colonized by Greeks, was called *Magna Græcia*; from which his sect of philosophy was called the *Italic*. Here his disciples were very numerous, and they continued with more or less reputation about two hundred years.

It is not possible to ascertain with any certainty what it was that was taught by Pythagoras himself. For, besides committing nothing to writing, he enjoined the strictest secrecy on all his pupils, training them to the most severe discipline, the first part of which is said to have been an uninterrupted silence of five years. By this means nothing of his doctrines transpired till a little before the time of Plato, which was something more than a century after the establishment of the sect, when several philosophers in Greece having acquired much reputation by their writings, the masters of the Italic schools began to publish what they had been taught of its doctrines, but mixed with their own.

Of these later Pythagoreans there are extant two curious and valuable treatises, one by Ocellus Luca-

Lucanus and the other by Timæus Locrus, besides many large extracts by Stobæus from the writings of Archytas, and besides many fragments from Theages, the Sentences of Democrates, Secundus, Demophilus and Sextus, and verses which have obtained for their excellence the title of *golden*, written as Fabricius supposes by Empedocles, but certainly by some learned Pythagorean. From these sources we must now be content to collect the best account that we can of the general principles of the Pythagorean philosophy. They are all published in *Gale's Opuscula Mythologica*, and some of the latter of them I suspect to contain sentiments that do not properly belong to any system of heathen philosophy, but to have been borrowed from Christianity. In the choice of these I have been very sparing, and they will be noticed, as it is my object not to go beyond the time when Christianity became the religion of the Roman emperors.

From the genuine tracts above-mentioned it will not be difficult to collect a pretty just idea of the principles of this sect, at least as improved by the followers of Pythagoras; and as to what he taught that has never come to light, which was probably something more near to the oriental philosophy, it is of little consequence to know at present.

SECTI-

## SECTION I.

*Concerning God.*

That God is the maker and governor of the world; and the sovereign disposer of all events, was taken for granted by all the Pythagoreans, and there is a great display of genuine piety in what remains of their writings. Timæus says "God is the author and parent of all things, but what is produced by him we see with our eyes." The honour due to God, and to other objects of worship according to their respective ranks, is inculcated in the first of the golden verses of Pythagoras. "In the first place honor the gods, as the laws direct, and observe oaths. Then venerate the famous heroes, and the infernal gods, performing with respect to them the rites directed by the laws. Then honour thy parents, and nearest relations." This probably refers to some religious ceremony in honour of men's ancestors, which is to this day a great article in the religion of the Hindoos.

All this, however, might be in obedience to the laws, the omission of which would have been punish-

punishable ; but the author of these verses farther directs to begin no work without asking the divine blessing for its success. Evil, as well as good, is here ascribed to the providence of God. "Whatever portion you have of the calamity that befalls men through the divine appointment bear with patience, and without complaining. However, remedy the evil if you can, and consider that the Parcæ do not assign much of this to good men." Here the assignment of the Parcæ are considered as the same with the will of the gods. One of the sayings collected by Demophilus is, "God sends evil to men not in anger, for anger is foreign to God. This takes place when things come by accident, whereas nothing can come to God but what he wills."

There is much good sense, as well as piety, in the precepts of Pythagoras relating to God, at least such as are ascribed to him by those who collected his sayings. Among them are the following. "Gifts and sacrifices confer no honour on God, but a pious mind joins it finally to God. For things that are similar must be joined to things similar, (Dem.) God has not on the earth a place more suitable to him than a chaste  
" and

“and pure mind. (Ib.) If you consider that  
“whatever is done by the mind or the body is  
“seen by God, you will revere his presence, from  
“whom nothing can be concealed; for you will  
“have God residing in your breast,” (Ib.) Having  
mentioned a variety of good works, the golden  
verses add, “These will put you in the way of di-  
“vine virtue.”

It is the more probable that these pious sentiments were the genuine produce of the Pythagorean school, as it was nearer to the patriarchal times, and something like those in the book of Job, when true piety was still more prevalent, and more free from superstition. We shall, however, observe a lamentable departure from the simple idea of revelation, when we see what the Pythagoreans say concerning the structure of the world, and the nature of the human soul, on which subjects they led the way to all the wild ideas of Plato and some of the sentiments of Aristotle, though these do not seem to have been willing to acknowledge their obligations to them.

## SECTION

C.



## SECTION II.

*Of the Structure of the World.*

We shall see in this section how far the minds of the most intelligent men can wander from reason and common sense, when they speculate on subjects that are above their comprehension, and on which, having no light from revelation, it was impossible that they should get any at all.

Moses with great simplicity, as expressing all that he believed, and all that he could know, on the subject, says "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. But these philosophers, having lost every tradition of this kind, (which, however, was retained in the East) maintained that the universe had no beginning, as well as that it will have no end. "All plants and animals, says Ocellus Lucanus (Cap. 1. & 3.) and also the human race, have always been, and will ever be as they now are." This, too, is contrary to the doctrine of our scriptures, which holds out to us a far more pleasing prospect, viz. a perpetual progress to a better state of things, and the great advantage which

which virtuous men will derive from it, in their own constant improvement, and the removal of every impediment to it, with every thing else that is painful and distressing to them. Of this no heathen philosopher had the least idea.

Notwithstanding the opinion of the Pythagoreans, of one Supreme God, they admitted many inferior deities, and particularly considered *the world* as endued with life and divinity, and in their account of the formation of it we shall see the *intelligible ideas* of Plato, which he, no doubt, borrowed from them. "God," says Timæus, "formed the world out of all kinds of matter. It is one, the only begotten, endued with a soul and reason. When God willed to produce a perfect offspring, he made this generated god, not to be perishable from any cause except by the god that made it. The world therefore remains as it was created by God, free from corruption and death. It is the best of all created things, since it arose from the best of causes. In this the creator proposed to himself no model made by hand, but his own *ideas*, and *intelligible essence*, according to which, when things are made with exquisite art, they are the most beautiful, and require not to be mended by any new operation."

In a farther account of these *ideas*, he says, "There is in the universe something that is permanent, and intelligible, the exemplar of the things that are produced, which are in a perpetual flux. They are called *ideas*, and are comprehended by the mind." He afterwards calls these *ideas forms* which are comprehended by the mind, and *science*. "Before the heavens existed, there were *forms*, and *matter*, and God, who is good, and is the author of that which is best."

The Pythagoreans speak of every thing as adapted to *harmonical numbers*, and on this subject Timæus goes into many particulars, which it would be tedious to recite. "Of these," however, he says "the soul of the world is constituted. Life," he says, "supports the body, and the cause of this is the soul (*ψυχή*). Harmony supports the world, and the cause (*αἰτία*) of this is God." Fragments.

"God," he says, "placed the soul of the world in its center, and also produced it externally," probably meaning that, though seated in the center, its operation goes beyond it.

The world is not the only inferior deity in this system. "In every part of the world," says Ocellus

Ius Lucanus (cap. 3.) "there are inhabitants of a nature proper to it, as gods in the heavens, men upon the earth, in the higher regions demons, and of course the race of man must always continue.

Matter these philosophers seem to have considered as having always existed, independently of the deity, and as having been subject to laws which he could not wholly control. "Whence," Timæus says, though with some degree of obscurity. "There are two causes of all things, *mind* of those "things which are produced with reason, and *necessity* of those which exist by a kind of force, "according to the powers and properties of body." They, therefore, did not want any other cause of evil besides matter.

### SECTION III.

#### *Of the Human Soul.*

According to these Pythagoreans, the human soul is not of a nature so distinct from the body, but that it has both some connection with it, and some properties in common with it. "The source of "vice," says Timæus, is in pleasure and grief,

C 3.

"desire

“ desire and fear, which being excited in the body, get mixed with the soul, and have obtained various names from their various effects, as love, desire,” &c. so that the *passions* are common to the soul and the body, though they are first excited in the latter.

They maintained, however, the superiority of the mind to the body as when Archytas (Gale's, Op. myth. p. 732.) says, “In all human things wisdom is most excellent, as the sight is more so than the other senses, the mind (*νοῦς*) than the soul (*ψυχή*) and the sun than the stars.” Here we have two parts of the soul, or of the man, distinguished by their respective names, the former, signifying the seat of intelligence, and the other that of mere animal life.

Timæus explains this division of the soul farther when he says, “One part of the human soul is endowed with reason and intelligence, but the other is without reason, and stupid. The former is the more excellent, but both have their seat about the head, that the other parts of the soul, and of the body too, might be subservient to it, as being under the same tabernacle of the body. But that part of the soul which is without reason,

and

“ and which is prone to anger, has its seat about  
 “ the heart; and that which has concupiscence  
 “ has its seat about the liver. But the brain is the  
 “ principle, and root, of the spinal marrow; and  
 “ in it the soul has the seat of its government.,’  
 (Gale’s, opus. myth. p. 556. 557.)

Theages divides the soul in the same manner,  
 “ One of the parts,” he says, “ has reason, another  
 “ anger, and the third desire. The virtue of pru-  
 “ dence,” he says, “ belongs to the first part, for-  
 “ titude to the second, and temperance to the third,  
 “ and justice is the virtue of the whole soul.”  
 (Ibid. p. 688.)

How much more simple and satisfactory is the  
 short account that Moses gives of the formation and  
 constituent principles of man. After giving an ac-  
 count of the formation of all other animals, he says  
 that in the last place, God made man *of the dust of*  
*the ground*, and then breathed into him the breath  
 of life, after which he was a living soul, or being;  
 that is, after *the man* was completely made, with all  
 his powers, those of the mind, as well as those of  
 the body, God enabled him to *breath*, by which all  
 his powers were excited, and brought into actual  
 exercise. Nothing is here said of any division of

There was a great degree of austerity in the discipline, and general maxims of the Pythagoreans, which forbade all unnecessary gratifications. With respect to the commerce of the sexes, Ocellus Lucanus, (Ch. 4. Gale's Op. Myth. 531.) says, "God gave proper instruments, and appetites, to men not for the sake of pleasure, but for the propagation of the species. If there be any commerce with women with any other view, the offspring will be the bane of society. They will be wicked and miserable, hateful to God, to demons, and to men, and also to families and states. For this reason," he adds, "laws were made in Greece that men should have no commerce with their own mothers, daughters, or sisters, nor in any sacred place, or in public." He also says that "all commerce contrary to nature" by which he no doubt meant sodomy, "must be prevented."

Many of the sentences of Demophilus breathe such a spirit of devotion, that they are justly suspected of a purer source than any heathen philosophy. On this account I shall quote but few of them. "Do not ask of God what you cannot keep; for no gift of God can be taken from you. He, therefore, will not give what you cannot

" keep.

“keep..... No gift of God is greater than vir-  
 “tue..... A frugal and poor philosopher lives a  
 “life like to that of God, and he considers it as the  
 “greatest wealth, that he possesses nothing exter-  
 “nal (that is out of his control) nothing unneces-  
 “sary. For the acquisition of riches inflames co-  
 “vetousness, but to live well and happily nothing  
 “is requisite but to act justly..... Being born  
 “of God, and having our root in him, we should  
 “adhere to it. For springs of water, and the pro-  
 “ductions of the earth, dry up, or putrefy, when  
 “cut off from their respective sources.....  
 “It is impossible that the same person should be  
 “addicted to pleasure, or the acquisition of riches,  
 “and be devoted to God. And though he should  
 “sacrifice hecatombs, he is the more impious, and  
 “farther removed from religion and God.” (Gale’s,  
 Op. Myth. p. 620, 625.)

But what are the best maxims, precepts, or e-  
 ven laws, without proper sanctions? They will be  
 admired, and respected, by those who are previous-  
 ly disposed to observe them; but on others, which  
 is the thing principally to be aimed at, they will  
 have no effect whatever; but may even be ridicul-  
 ed, and openly disregarded. And what are the pro-  
 per sanctions of virtue and piety, which evidently  
 have



not always any reward in this life, but that providence of God which extends to *another*, and with this the Pythagorean philosophy was not provided.

SOCRATES

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## SOCRATES AND JESUS

### COMPARED.

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#### *INTRODUCTION.*

THE history of Socrates is so singular a phenomenon in the heathen world, and his general behaviour, and the manner of life to which he devoted himself, have in them so much that resemble those of the ancient prophets, and even of our Saviour, that they have always drawn the particular attention of the friends of divine revelation, though these have formed very different opinions on the subject.

If we look into any account of the Grecian philosophers who preceded Socrates, or who followed him (and some of the most eminent of the latter were his professed disciples) we shall find none of them to resemble him, even in the general features of his conduct, though his education as a philosopher was in all respects the same with theirs; and they all fell far short of him with respect to purity of moral character.

If we may depend upon what is transmitted to

us concerning him by Xenophon and Plato, who were his cotemporaries and disciples, both men of great eminence, (and there were no writers in the heathen world whose characters stand higher than theirs) he was a very extraordinary man with respect both to wisdom and virtue. And as Socrates had enemies as well as friends, and his accusers must have had their friends too, had the accounts of Xenophon or Plato not been in the main agreeable to truth, it would have been in our power, (as the age abounded with writers) to perceive some trace of their objections. But nothing of this kind appears.

From both these accounts we must conclude that Socrates was a man who, from early life, not only abstained from vice himself: and practised every thing that he thought to be a virtue, but one who devoted himself to the promoting of virtue in others; continually throwing himself in the way of every person whom he thought he could benefit by his exhortations or instructions; that by this means a considerable number of young men, especially those of the best families, of much consideration and wealth, in the city of Athens, were strongly attached to him; and yet, that though he was  
poor

poor, and many of them were rich, he never accepted of any reward for his instructions.

In his conduct as a citizen he was most uncorrupt and fearless, risking his popularity, and even his life, rather than consent to any thing that appeared to him unjust. When he was falsely accused he behaved with the greatest magnanimity at his trial, and when sentence of death was passed upon him he yielded to it with the greatest calmness. He refused to solicit for any abatement of the sentence as a favour, and declined all the offers of his friends to assist him in an escape from prison. When the fatal cup was brought to him, he drank it with the greatest readiness and composure, and died with much apparent satisfaction.

The sentiments and principles of such a man as this, who lived in the most polished city of Greece, at a period the most distinguished for every thing that can contribute to fame, in arts, science, or policy, and yet the most addicted to idolatry of any city in Greece, certainly deserves to be investigated, and his conduct to be scrutinized; and this I shall endeavour to do in the best manner that the materials we are furnished with will enable me.

## SECTION I.

*Of the Polytheism and Idolatry of Socrates.*

That Socrates was an idolater, or a worshipper of a multiplicity of Gods, and such as were acknowledged by his countrymen, and that he conformed in all respects to the popular modes of worship, cannot be denied. "He sacrificed, says Xenophon, (p. 2,) both on the public altars of the city, and often at his own house; and he also practiced divination in the most public manner." On trial he said, (p. 377.) "he had never sacrificed to, or acknowledged, or sworn by, or even made mention of, any gods but Jupiter, Juno, and others that were received by his fellow citizens. "Do not I believe," says he, (p. 3.) "that the sun, and the moon, are gods as well as others?" "Do we not suppose demons" (and one of these he acknowledged to have given particular attention to him) "to be either gods, or the sons of gods," (p. 21.) And in his last moments, after he had drunk the poison, recollecting a vow that he had made to sacrifice a cock to Æsculapius, he desired Crito, a pupil and particular friend of his, to discharge

charge it for him, and begged that he would not neglect to do it, (p. 186.) Though on one occasion he speaks of *one God* that constructed and preserves the world, (p. 318.) he does not say that he was the *only God*.

All heathens and idolaters, civilized or uncivilized, were addicted to divination; imagining that by this means they could pry into futurity, and find out what their gods signified by certain signs, as the flight of birds, the form of the livers of the animals they sacrificed, and many other things, which are generally considered as accidents. Socrates was so far from seeing the folly of these observances, that he was to an immoderate degree assiduous in his attention to them. Being of opinion, (p. 8.) that "the gods signified their will by divination to those whom they were disposed to favour." Whenever he was in doubt about any thing of importance, he sent some of his friends to consult the oracle (p. 5.) and he advised his friends, if they had occasion for the knowledge of any thing that they could not attain to themselves, to apply to the gods in the modes of divination, (p. 352;) Saying, that "they who would regulate either their own affairs, or those of the state, stood in need of these practices." (p. 5.)

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Besides

Besides having recourse to the usual modes of divination, Socrates believed that, upon every occasion of importance, the will of the gods was signified to himself in particular; but in what manner he does not clearly say. He sometimes calls it *a voice* (*Φωνή*) p. 28. At his trial he said he had often been heard to say that a divine voice was frequently present with him.

Notwithstanding all this evidence of the polytheistic sentiments, and corresponding practice, of Socrates, Rollin and others suppose him to have been a believer in the *divine unity*, and to have been sensible of the absurdity and folly of all the popular superstitions, and of the popular worship of his country. But I am far from seeing any sufficient evidence of this. If he had had the weakness, which however is never ascribed to him, to conceal this before his judges, he might have avowed it before his death, bearing a dying and most honourable testimony to important truth; whereas, on both these occasions, his language and conduct were the very reverse of what, on the supposition of this superior knowledge, they ought to have been. Indeed I much question whether any person educated as Socrates was, among polytheists  
and

and idolaters, could possibly, by the mere light of nature, have attained to a firm belief of the divine unity, though he might in some degree have been sensible of the folly and absurdity of the prevailing superstitions.

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## SECTION II.

### *The Sentiments of Socrates concerning the Gods, and their Providence.*

A polytheist and idolater as Socrates was, he had just and honourable sentiments concerning the divine power and providence, and of the obedience that men owe to the gods. And though his ideas on these subjects are far short of what we find in the Psalms of David, and the writings of the Hebrew prophets, they are much more rational and sublime than the opinions of the heathens in general, or those of the philosophers that followed him.

We have seen that Socrates ascribed to a god the formation and government of the world, whereas, according to Hesiod (whose *theogony* was, no doubt, that which was generally received by the Greeks) the world had been from eternity, and the origin of the gods was subsequent to it. Socrates

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point



points out in particular the wisdom and goodness of providence in the disposition of the different senses and the several parts of the human body, as that of the eyes, the eye-lashes, and eye-lids; and in the structure of the teeth, which in the different animals are shaped and situated in the most convenient manner, the best adapted to their respective uses (p. 62.) He had, no doubt, the same opinion of the wisdom and goodness displayed in the structure and disposition of every thing else in nature.

He, moreover, believed that the gods know every thing that is not only said or done, but that is even thought and intended, though ever so privately; being present in all places; so that, whenever they think proper, they can give intimations to man of every thing relating to them, (p. 14.). "The deity" (*το θεῖον*) he says, (p. 65.) "sees and hears all things, is every where present, and takes care of all things." And he makes this obvious and practical use of the doctrine, viz. that "if men believed it, they would abstain from all base actions even in private, persuaded that nothing that they did was unknown to the gods." (p. 70.)

The gods, he also thought, know every thing that is future, though they conceal the knowledge of those things from men in general; so that,

"though

“ though a man built a house, he could not be certain that he should inhabit it, nor could a general be sure whether it would be proper for him to march his army, &c.” (p. 6.) Agreeably to this, it was his custom, in his prayer to the gods, to request that they would grant him what was good, without specifying what he wished for ; since they best knew what was so. (p. 45.) Like the heathens in general, he considered lightning as coming more immediately from the gods, as one mode of giving intimations to men. (p. 312.)

According to Socrates, it is the gods that have made the distinction between men and the inferior animals, having given them rational souls, so that they only know that there are gods, and can worship them. “ There is no such principle and excellent quality,” he said “ in the brutes ; and in consequence of this superiority, men are like gods with respect to other animals,” (p. 66.)

Speaking of the goodness of the gods to man, he says, (p. 306.) “ they supply us not only with necessities, but with things that are adapted to give us pleasure.” He mentions particularly as their gifts, water and fire, the grateful and useful change of the seasons, and our various senses, adapted to

D 4.

peculiar

peculiar species of good. "This," he says, (p. 310.) "shews their concern for us."

Socrates considered all unwritten laws, obligatory on man in society, the origin of which cannot be traced, as having the gods for their authors. Among these he mentions the universal maxim, that the gods ought to be worshipped, (p. 327.) that gratitude is due to benefactors, that parents ought not to have sexual commerce with their children, and all other universally acknowledged principles of morality.

In answer to the objection from our not seeing the gods, he mentions several things in nature, the existence and powers of which cannot be denied, and which are invisible or inscrutable by us, as lightning, the wind, and the intellectual powers of man; "Thus," says he, (p. 313.) "when we see the powers of the gods, we must reverence them; though we do not see them."

Nothing can exceed the respect that Socrates entertained for the authority and will of the gods, whenever, and in whatever manner, it was made known. "If," says he, (p. 51.) "the gods signify their will, we must no more depart from it, and take other counsel, than we should prefer the conduct of a blind man, who did not know the  
" road,

“ road, to that of one who saw it and knew it ; al-  
“ ways preferring the direction of the gods, to that  
“ of men.”

Agreeable to this, when he was addressing his judges, he said, (p. 40.) that “ if they would acquit  
“ him on condition that he would discontinue his  
“ instructions to young persons, which he believ-  
“ ed the gods had enjoined him, or suffer death, he  
“ would answer that he must obey god rather than  
“ man ; and that if they should banish him to any  
“ other country, he should think it his duty, to do  
“ there what he had done at Athens.” (p. 40.)  
“ Whatever be the situation in which a man is plac-  
“ ed, there, he said, he should remain at any risk,  
“ even of life, (p. 23.) dreading baseness more  
“ than any thing else. So the gods having, as, I  
“ believe, placed me where I have been, and order-  
“ ed me to remain philosophizing, and scrutinizing  
“ myself and others, I must not desert that station,  
“ for fear of death, or any thing else.”

When Aristodemus, with whom he was dis-  
coursing on this subject, said that he did not deny  
that that there were gods, but he thought they were  
too great to stand in need of his worship, Socrates  
replied, (p. 64.) that the greater they were, the more  
they were to be honoured.

As to the manner in which the gods were to be honoured, he, like other heathens, thought it was to be determined by the laws of every particular country. But he justly thought that the satisfaction the gods received from these marks of respect did not depend upon the costliness of the sacrifice. "The offering of a poor man," he said, (p. 49.) "is as acceptable to the gods, as the more expensive ones of the rich."

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### SECTION III.

#### *Of the excellent moral Character of Socrates.*

These, it cannot be denied, are excellent sentiments, and much to be admired, considering the little light that Socrates had, viz. that of nature only, uninstructed by any revelation. And with him these sentiments were not merely speculative. His whole life seems to have been strictly conformable to them, being eminently virtuous, and wholly devoted to the service of his fellow citizens.

Xenophon, who knew him well (though, having been his pupil, we may suppose him to have been prejudiced in his favour) gives the following general account of his character and conduct, (p. 359.)

359.) "He was so religious that he did nothing  
 "without the advice of the gods. He was so  
 "just, that he never injured any person in the  
 "smallest matter, but rendered every service in  
 "his power to those with whom he had any con-  
 "nection. He was so temperate that he never  
 "preferred what was grateful to what was useful.  
 "He was so prudent, that he never mistook the  
 "the worse for the better; nor did he want the  
 "advice of others, but always judged for himself.  
 "In his conversation, he excelled in defining what  
 "was right, and in shewing it to others, reprov-  
 "ing the vicious, and exhorting to the practice  
 "of virtue."

Though the circumstances of Socrates were the reverse of affluent, he would never receive any gratuity for the lessons that he gave, as all other philosophers and public teachers did; and by this means, as he said, (p. 74.) he preserved his freedom and independence. When upon his trial he was urged by his friends to supplicate the judges, as was the universal custom, in order to move their compassion, he refused to ask any favour even of them; being of opinion that this was contrary to the *laws*, according to which, and not according to *favour*, judges ought to decide, (p. 317.)

In

In all the changes in the political state of the turbulent city of Athens, which were many in the time of Socrates, he adhered inflexibly to what he thought to be just, without being influenced by hope or fear. This was particularly conspicuous on two occasions. The first was when, being one of the judges in the case of the ten generals who were tried for their lives on account of their not collecting and burying the dead after a naval engagement, and all the rest (influenced, no doubt, by the popular clamour against them) condemned them to die, he alone refused to concur in the sentence. Soon after the citizens in general, convinced of the injustice of the sentence, though after it had been carried into execution, approved of his conduct. The other was during the government of the thirty tyrants, when, though in manifest danger of his life, he refused to approve of their measures; and he escaped by nothing but their overthrow, and the city recovering its liberty.

That Socrates at the close of life expressed his satisfaction in his own conduct cannot be thought extraordinary. It was, he observed, (p. 366.) in concurrence with the general opinion of his countrymen, and with a declaration of the oracle at Delphi in his favour. For when it was consulted  
by

by Chærephon, one of his disciples, the answer was, that there was no person more honorable (ἐλευθεροτερον) more just, or more wise \* than he. (p. 371.)

He put, however, a very modest construction on this oracle; which was that, though he knew no more than other men, he did not, like them, pretend to know more. (p. 9. 12.) so that he only knew himself, and his own ignorance, better than other men. His reputation in consequence of it, and of his conduct in general, had no other than the happiest influence upon him. For, addressing his judges (p. 34.) he observed, that "it being a generally received opinion, that he was wiser than other men," he said that "whether that opinion was well founded or not, he thought he ought not to demean himself by any unworthy action."

Notwithstanding Socrates's consciousness of integrity, and general merit, and the good opinion of the wise and virtuous, he was so sensible of the malice

\* In Xenophon the response of the oracle is expressed by σωφρονεστερον, but Plato always uses the word σοφωτερον. Cicero in referring to it uses the word sapientissimus.



malice of his enemies, that when he was brought before his judges he had no expectation of being acquitted, and therefore he expressed his surprise when he found that he was condemned by a majority of no more than three votes, (p. 36.) out of 500.\*

It being customary at Athens, when any person was found guilty of the charge brought against him, to require him to say what, in his own opinion, his punishment should be ; and this question being proposed to Socrates, conscious as he was of no demerit, but on the contrary of his valuable services to his country ; he said that, since he had made no gain by his profession of public instructor, had never held any lucrative office in the state, and he was poor, he was, like other persons in a similar situation, and with similar claims, entitled to a maintenance at the public expense in the Prytaneum, (p. 37.) If they destroyed him, he farther said, they would not soon find another like him, (p. 27.) This has the appearance of vanity and ostentation. But if the praising a man's self be at all justifiable, it is on such an occasion as this,

*\* This, exclusive of the president, Rollin supposes to have been the number of the judges.*

this, when he is unjustly censured and condemned by others.

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#### SECTION IV.

*The Imperfection of Socrates's Ideas concerning Piety, and Virtue in general.*

Just and sublime as were the sentiments that Socrates professed concerning the power and providence of the gods, and of the obligation that men are under to reverence and worship them, his ideas of the *manner* in which this was to be done were by no means such as might have been expected in consequence of them. According to him, all the duties that properly rank under the head of *piety* are the observance of the religious rites of the countries in which men live. "The gods, he, says, (p. 338.) are not to be honoured by every man as he pleases, but as the laws direct." This was agreeable to the answer received from Delphi, when inquiry was made concerning the manner in which men should please the gods; for the answer returned was, "by complying with the institutions of our country," (p. 313.) After mentioning this, Socrates added, that "all states had

"had decreed that the " gods are to be placated  
 " by sacrifices, according to the faculties of each  
 " of them." (p. 314.)

Now, what the rites of the heathen religion were, those of Athens by no means excepted, is well known. Little did they accord with any just sentiments of what we now deem to be *pious*, i. e. a reverence for the perfections and providence of God, gratitude for his favours, submission to his will, in a strict obedience to the moral precepts he has enjoined, and confidence in his protection and favour in consequence of it. With these sentiments sacrifices, and the other rites of the heathen religions, had no connection whatever. Rather, they were the occasion, and provocatives, of licentiousness, and lewdness, as must have been well known to Socrates himself.

The moral maxims of Socrates, independent of those relating to religion, are admirable, especially his saying, (p. 83.) that "there is no better way to true glory than to endeavour to be good rather than seem to be so." But his general rule concerning the nature of *justice*, in which he probably included virtue in general, was that, "whatever is *lawful*," or agreeable to the laws, "is just," (p. 321. 326.) whereas, nothing  
 can

can be more variable than the laws of particular states, or more discordant with one another.

With respect to the subjects of religion and morals in general, Socrates always professed a greater regard to the laws than reason or good sense will justify, though he might be induced to say more on this subject in consequence of his being accused of being no friend to the popular religion, and of corrupting youth by attaching them to himself, to the neglect of their parents and others. And it is very possible that, in some of his instructions he had inculcated duties of a purer and higher kind than the institutions of his country would encourage or authorize. Such, however, might be expected from the sentiments he generally expressed.

Considering the wretched philosophy of the Sophists, whose ostentation, and absurdities, Socrates exposed, we shall not wonder at the advice he gave his hearers with respect to the principal object of their pretended science. He recommended to them the study of Geography, Astronomy, and the sciences in general, only so far as they were of practical use in life, (p. 350,) but he particularly dissuaded them from the study of *the structure of the universe*, because, he said, "it was not designed to be

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"discovered

“discovered by man, nor could it be agreeable to the gods to have that inquired into which they did not make known to man.” For nothing could be more presumptuous than the manner in which those Sophists, and the philosophers of those times in general, decided concerning this great subject; and with them it led to nothing of any real value with respect to men’s conduct, but puffed them up with conceit, without any foundation of real knowledge. On this account he is said by Seneca to have reduced all philosophy to morals. *Totam philosophiam revocavit ad mores, Epist. 71.*

But could Socrates have seen the progress that a truer philosophy than any that existed in his time has now made, and how directly it leads to the most profound admiration of the works and providence of God, unfolding the wisdom, power, and goodness of the great creator; and had he seen the connection which this reverence for God, and consequently for his laws, has (on the system of revelation) with moral virtue, he would have been the first to lay stress upon it, and to inculcate it upon his pupils.

As the laws of his country, which with Socrates were too much the standard of right, with respect  
both

both to religion and morals, were very imperfect on many subjects, we do not wonder that he did not express a sufficient indignation (such as those do who are acquainted with the purer and more severe precepts of revealed religion relating to them) at some particular vices, especially sodomy; which the laws of God by Moses justly punished with death.

When Critias, then his pupil, was in love with Euthydemus, and avowedly, as it should seem, for the vilest purpose, he dissuaded him from pursuing his object; but only as a thing that was illiberal, unbecoming a man of honour and delicacy. "It was" he said "begging of the object of his passion like a pauper, and for a thing that would do him no good," (p. 29.) The gratification of this passion he said, resembled a hog rubbing himself against a stone, (p. 30.) This, no doubt, shews a *contempt* for this vice, but no sufficient *abhorrence* of it, as such a degradation of human nature ought to excite. When another of his pupils gave a kiss to a son of Alcibiades, who was very beautiful, he only asked whether it did not require great boldness to do it; meaning that, after this, it would not be easy to refrain from endeavouring to take great-

er liberties with him. There is too much of pleantry, and too little of seriousness, in this method of considering the subject.

A similar remark may be made on the interview that Socrates had with a celebrated courtesan of the name of Theodota, whom he had the curiosity to visit on account of what he had heard of her extraordinary beauty and elegant form, so that statuaryes applied to her to take models from her; and to whom the historian says she exhibited her person as much as decency would permit. In this situation Socrates and his pupils found her; but in the conversation that he had with her he discovered not just sense of the impropriety of her life and profession. She spake to him of her galants as her friends, who contributed to her support without labour, and hoped that by his recommendation she should procure more; adding, "How shall I persuade you to this." He replies, "This you must find out yourself, and consider in what way it may be in my power to be of use to you." And when she desired him to come often to see her, he only jestingly said, that he was not sufficiently at leisure from other engagements. (p. 251.) Ready as Socrates was to give good advice to young men, he  
said

said nothing to her to recommend a more virtuous and reputable course of life than that which he knew she led.

It was not in this manner that Jesus and his apostles would have conversed with such a person. He did not decline all intercourse with women of her character, but it was not at their houses; and what he said was intended to instruct and reclaim them. He considered them as the *sick*, and himself as the *physician*.

Women of the profession of this Theodota, if they had been well educated, were resorted to in the most open manner by men of the first character at Athens, as Aspasia by Socrates himself, and by Pericles, who afterwards married her. Nor was fornication in general, with women of that profession, at all disreputable, either in Greece, or at Rome.

How much more pure are the morals of christianity in this respect. So great, however, was the prevalence of this vice, and so little had it been considered as one, in the heathen world, that the apostle Paul, writing to the christian churches in Greece, and especially at Corinth, the richest and most voluptuous city in that part of the world, is urgent to dissuade his converts from it. See

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particularly (1. Cor. vi. 9. &c.) where among those who would be excluded from the kingdom of heaven, he mentions fornicators in the first place. *Know ye not, that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God. Be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.*

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#### SECTION V.

##### *Of Socrates's Belief in a future State.*

Though Socrates had more just ideas concerning the nature and character of deity, and also of the nature and obligations of virtue, than the generality of his countrymen, and even of the philosophers, he does not appear to have had any more knowledge than others concerning the great sanction of virtue, in the *doctrine of a future state*. In none of his conversations recorded by Xenophon on the subject of virtue with young men and others, is there the least mention of it, or allusion to it; which was certainly unavoidable if he had been really acquainted with it, and believed it.

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Speaking of the happiness of his virtuous pupils, he mentions the pleasure they would have in this life, and the respect that would be paid to them; and says that, "when they died they would not be without honour, consigned to oblivion, but would be for ever celebrated, (p. 111.\*)" Having said this, could he have forbore to add their happier condition after death, if he had had any belief of it?

All his dissuasives from vice are grounded on some natural and necessary inconvenience to which men expose themselves by it in this life, but none of them have any respect to another. Thus he represents intemperate persons as slaves to their appetites, (p. 322.) and treating of what he considered as being the laws of nature, and therefore as those of the gods, as the prohibition of marriage between parents and their children, (p. 828.) he only says that "the offspring of such a mixture is bad, "one of the parties being too old to produce "healthy children;" and this reason does not apply to the case of brothers and sisters. Another law of nature, he says, is to do good in return for good received; but the penalty of not doing it he makes to be nothing more than being deserted by a

man's friends when he will have the most want of them, and to be forced to apply to those who have no friendship for him. (p. 329.)

It is particularly remarkable that nothing that Xenophon says as coming from Socrates, not only in his conversations with his pupils, but even at his trial, and the scenes before his death, implies a belief of a future state. All that we have of this kind is from Plato; and though he was present at the trial, and therefore what he says is, no doubt, entitled to a considerable degree of credit, it wants the attestation of *another witness*; and the want of that of Xenophon is something more than *negative*; especially as it is well known that Plato did not scruple to put into the mouth of Socrates language and sentiments that never fell from him; as it is said Socrates himself observed, when he was shewn the dialogue entitled *Lysis*, in which he is the principal speaker, as he is in many others.

In Plato's celebrated dialogue intitled *Phædo*, in which he makes Socrates advance arguments in proof of a future state, we want the evidence of some person who was present; for Plato himself was at that time confined by sickness, (P. p. 74.) so that it is very possible, as nothing is said of it by

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Xenophon, that he might not have held any discourse on the subject at all.

Besides, all that Socrates is represented by Plato to have said on this subject is far from amounting to any thing like certain *knowledge*, and real *belief*, with respect to it, such as appears in the discourses of Jesus, and the writings of the apostles. Socrates, according to Plato, generally speaks of a future state; and the condition of men in it, as the *popular belief*, which might be true or false. "If" says he (p. 46) "what is said be true, we shall in another state die no more. In death" he says to "his judges" (p. 44.) "we either lose all sense of things, or, as it is said, go into some other place; and if so, it will be much better; as we shall be out of the power of partial judges, and come before those that are impartial. Minos, Rhadamanthus, Æacus, Triptolemus, and others, who were demigods." Taking his leave of them, he says, I must now depart to die, while you continue in life; but which of these is better, the gods only can tell; for in my opinion no man can know this."

This certainly implies no faith on which to ground real practice, from which a man could, with the apostle, *live as seeing things invisible*, be-

ing governed by a regard to them more than to things present, the one as certain as the other, and infinitely superior in value, *the things that are seen being temporary, while those that are unseen are eternal.* (2. Cor. iv. 10.)

Notwithstanding this uncertainty of Socrates with respect to a future state, he died with great composure and dignity; considering his death at that time as, on the whole, better for him than to live any longer in the circumstances in which, at his time of life (being seventy years old) he must have lived; especially as a coward, discovering unmanly dread of death, in exile and disgrace; dying also without torture, surrounded by his friends, and admirers, who would ensure his fame to the latest posterity.

That such *arguments* in proof of a future state as Plato puts into the mouth of Socrates should really have been advanced, and have have any stress laid upon them, by him, in so serious a time as just before his death, is exceedingly improbable, from the extreme futility of them. They are more like the mere play of imagination, than the deductions of reason.

His first argument is, that as every thing else in nature has its contrary, *death* must have it also,  
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and if so, it must be followed by *life*, as *day* follows *night*, and a state of *vigilance* always follows *sleep*. (p. 56.) But might it not be said that, for the same reason, every thing that is *bitter* must some time or other become *sweet*, and every thing that is *sweet* become *bitter* ?

His second argument is, that all our present acquired knowledge is only the recollection of what we knew before in a former state. (p. 100.) But what evidence is there of this ?

His third argument is, that only compound substances are liable to corruption, by a separation of the parts of which they consist ; but the mind is a simple substance, and therefore cannot be affected by the dissolution of the body in death. (p. 111.) This is certainly the most plausible argument of the three, but it is of too subtle a nature to give much satisfaction. If the mind have several powers and affections, and be furnished with a multiplicity of ideas, there is the same evidence of its being a compound as there is with respect to the body ; and if the power of thinking, or *mental action*, bear any resemblance to corporeal *motion*, it may cease, and be suspended, though the substance remain.

Are these sufficient arguments for a man at the point

point of death to build his faith and hope upon? As this appears to have been all that the most sagacious of the heathens could attain to by the light of nature, what reason have we to be thankful for the superior light of revelation, and especially for the gospel, which *brings life and immortality to light*. (2. Tim. i. 10.)

Socrates does not, in this celebrated dialogue, make any mention of the argument from the *universal belief* of a future state, as handed down by *tradition* in all nations; which, though far short of a proper *proof* of the doctrine, is more plausible than any of the three arguments above mentioned. For it might be presumed that the ancestors of the human race, from whom the tradition descended to their posterity, had some proper evidence of what they delivered, though that had not been preserved, the doctrine itself only being retained. This, indeed, seems to have been the case with respect to the Jews. Though they were in the time of our Saviour firm believers in the doctrine of a resurrection, the record of the revelation (for it could not have come from any other source) had been long lost.

How far short is every thing that Socrates is represented as saying of the perfect assurance with  
which

which Jesus always spoke of his resurrection to an immortal life, and of the glory that was prepared for him in the councils of God from the foundation of the world; when, as the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews says (c. xii. 20.) *for the joy that was set before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.* How short it falls of the confidence which the apostle Paul, in the near-view of death, expresses with respect to *his* future prospects, (2. Tim. iv. 7.) *I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me at that day; and not to me only, but to them that love his appearing.* With what satisfaction and joy have thousands of christian martyrs relinquished this life in the assurance of a better.

Besides, after all that Socrates advances in proof of a future state, ~~he seems to make~~ it the peculiar privilege of those who apply to philosophy, who have in some degree abstracted the purer mind from the gross body by intense meditation. (p. 83.) "This," he says, (p. 94.) "was intended by the authors of the mysteries when they said that none besides the initiated would live with the gods at-  
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times, though in a manner less apparent ; and that his final treatment of men will be according to his proper character, whatever that be, if he be a righteous and good being, he will, no doubt, most approve of virtue and goodness in men, and show it by rewarding the righteous and punishing the wicked.

The reason why he does not do this completely at present, though we are not without some intimations of his *disposition* to do so, it is not difficult to account for. There must be time and opportunity to form characters. The existence of vice, as well as of virtue, in the world is necessary for this purpose ; and it is not till a character be properly formed that a suitable treatment can be adjusted to it. If our maker think of us at all, it must be for our good.

Thus do such supernatural suggestions as Socrates asserts that he had afford some obscure and indistinct evidence of a *moral government of the world*, and consequently of a future state of righteous retribution. Why such intimations were not more frequent, more distinct, or more general, is beyond our comprehension. If we be asked why the wise and benevolent author of nature permitted the rise and long continuance of the most absurd  
and

and abominable systems of polytheism and idolatry to prevail so long in the world, or why he should suffer so much vice and misery to exist in it at present; why mankind should be afflicted with war, pestilence, and famine, and be subject to such distressful accidents as lightning, hurricanes, and earthquakes, we can only say with Abraham of old, (Gen. xviii. 25.) that the *maker and judge of the earth will do what is right*; and therefore that all these evils, repugnant as they seem to our ideas of benevolence, may hereafter appear to have been the best methods of promoting general and lasting happiness.

If the present state be considered as nothing more than the *infancy* of our being, we may naturally expect to be no more able to account for our treatment in it, than a child is able to account for that of its parent, who, though ever so affectionate, must, if he be wise, continually do what the child, cannot see any reason for, and what he must think to be very often exceedingly harsh and unreasonable. And as appearances in nature, and in the structure of the world, furnish an unquestionable proof of a wise and benevolent author, the present imperfect state of virtue and happiness does, as such, afford some evidence that this is the infant

state of our being; and is therefore an argument, and a promise, as we may say, of future good. And slight as it may be, and less satisfactory than we could wish, it should be highly grateful and acceptable to us.

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#### SECTION VII.

*Of the Character, and Teaching, of Socrates compared with those of Jesus*

When we consider what was most obvious in the general disposition and behaviour of Socrates and of Jesus, we see no apparent difference with respect to the command of their natural appetites and passions, or their temper in general. Both were equally temperate, though as Jesus was not married, and was never charged with incontinence, he shewed a command of his natural passions in this respect for which there was no occasion in the case of Socrates. Both of these men seem to have been equally free from austerity and moroseness in their general behaviour, being equally affable, and no enemies to innocent festivity on proper occasions.

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They were both capable of strong personal attachments, as Socrates to several of his friends and pupils, and Jesus to the family of Lazarus, to his apostles in general, and to John in particular. And his discourses and prayer before his death shows his affection for them in the strongest manner. Also his attention to his mother, while hung upon the cross, deserves particular notice in this respect.

Both of them were the friends of virtue, and laboured to promote it; but Jesus expressed stronger indignation against vice, especially the vices of the great, and of the leading men of his country, against whose pride, hypocrisy, and injustice, he pronounced the most vehement and provoking invectives; whereas Socrates adopted the gentler method of irony and ridicule.

There was, I doubt not, great propriety, as well as ingenuity, in the ironical manner that Socrates is said to have very often used, in exposing the vices of particular persons; and by this means he is said, and with great probability, to have made himself many bitter enemies. But there was certainly more of *dignity* in the direct and serious invectives of Jesus, such as his saying, (Mat. xxiii. 13. &c.) *Woe unto you Scribes and pharisees, hypocrites, &c.*

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And let it not be forgotten that this was promulgated by the son of a carpenter, of only about thirty years of age, and publicly in the temple, where he was always attended by great multitudes of persons of all ranks, and that no reply was ever made to him on these occasions. He by this conduct made himself as many enemies as Socrates, but it was in a manner that showed more courage.

Both Jesus and Socrates took advantage of present incidents, as hints for their instructive discourses; but those of Socrates have the appearance of having been contrived before hand, while those to which Jesus alluded were such as naturally presented themselves at the time.

What was peculiar to Socrates was his proposing to his hearers a series of *questions*, by means of which he made the conclusions he wished to have drawn seem to be their own; so that all objections were precluded. A great peculiarity in the discourses of Jesus, though his manner was very various, and often authoritatively didactic, which that of Socrates never was, consisted in his numerous *parables*, the meaning of which, when he intended it to be so, was sufficiently obvious, and peculiarly striking; as in those of the rich man and Lazarus, of the man who was robbed, and nearly murdered,

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on his way to Jericho, and the peculiarly fine one of the prodigal son, and therefore more easily retained in memory, as well as adapted to make a stronger impression on the mind, than a moral lesson not so introduced and accompanied.

At other times there was an intended obscurity in the parables and sayings of Jesus. He did not always wish to be understood at the time, but to have what he said to be remembered, and reflected upon afterwards. Such sayings were calculated to engage more attention from their being expressed in a concise, figurative and enigmatical manner; as when he said, (John ii. 19.) *Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up.* Such a saying as this would not be forgotten. His enemies, we find, remembered it, and his friends would understand his meaning in due time; as they would his saying, (John xii. 31.) *If I be lifted up from the earth I will draw all men unto me;* in which he alluded both to his crucifixion, his resurrection, and the universal spread of his gospel.

It is very remarkable that there are not in the most elaborate compositions of the ancients or moderns any parables so excellent for pertinency to the occasion on which they were delivered, for propriety and consistency in their parts, and for im-

portant meaning, as those of Jesus. Numerous as they are, they all appear to have been unpremeditated, as they arose from circumstances in which the speaker had no choice. There is nothing trifling or absurd in any of them; and few others, though the result of much study, are free from objection of this kind. It will not be supposed that the parables of Jesus received any improvement from the writers of his life, and yet the more they are studied the more admirable they are found to be.\*

Both the discourses and the general manner of life of Socrates and Jesus have an obvious resemblance, as they both went about graciously doing good, according to their several abilities, situations, and opportunities; but we see an infinite superiority with respect to Jesus, though he had no such advantage

\* On this subject of parables, and every thing relating to the *internal evidences of christianity*, I would particularly recommend a most comprehensive and excellent work of Mr. J. Simpson's, entitled, *Internal and presumptive evidences of Christianity considered separately, and as united to form one argument*, 1801.

advantage of education and instruction as Socrates had.

Socrates had all the advantage that education, in the most polished city of Greece, and the most improved period of it, could give him ; having been enabled by the generosity of a wealthy citizen to attend the lectures of all the celebrated masters of his time, in every branch of science then known : and with respect to natural capacity, he was probably equal to Jesus, or any other man.

On the contrary, the circumstances of the parents of Jesus, and his low occupation till he appeared in public, exclude the supposition of his having had any advantage of liberal education. This, indeed, was objected to him by his adversaries. (John vii. 15.) *The jews marvelled, saying, How knoweth this man letters, having never learned,* that is, how did he acquire so much knowledge, without being regularly instructed by the professed teachers of the law ?

Notwithstanding this great disadvantage ; we find that, without any previous preparation that was visible, Jesus, from his very first appearance, assumed more authority, as a teacher and reprove of vice, than any other man before or since ; addressing



dressing himself to great multitudes, or single persons, the most eminent for their rank or knowledge, without the least embarrassment, and with an air of superiority to all men; and yet without the appearance of any thing impertinent, ostentatious, or insulting.

Had Socrates introduced any of his instructions with *Verily, verily, I say unto you*, or any language of a similar import, he would have exposed himself to the ridicule of his audience, even in the latest period of his life, when he had acquired the greatest respect and authority. But this language was usual with Jesus from the very first; as in his discourse on the mount, when, instead of being insulted, he by this very means excited the greater veneration and attachment. For we read, (Matt. vii. 28.) *It came to pass when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine, for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.*

How must any other man than Jesus have exposed himself to ridicule, if, when speaking of the Ninevites repenting at the preaching of Jonah, and of the queen of Sheba coming from her own distant country to hear the wisdom of Solomon, he had ad-

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ded, as Jesus did, *but a greater than Jonah*, and one *greater than Solomon is here*, (Matt. xii. 41. &c.) But for any thing that appears he was heard with the greatest awe and respect. Infinitely more arrogant must it have appeared in any other man to say, as he did, after his resurrection, (Matt. xxviii. 18.) *All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach all nations.* No man but one who had actually risen from the dead, and who had before this performed such miracles as convinced his hearers that he had a commission from God, could have used such language as this, and have been heard with acquiescence and respect.

To say nothing on the subject of miracles, to which Socrates did not pretend (but the truth of which in the case of Jesus can alone account for the air of superior dignity and authority that he constantly assumed, as a messenger from God, and having his authority delegated to him) his discourses relate to subjects of infinitely more importance than those of Socrates, the great object of them being to inculcate a purer and more sublime morality respecting God and man than any heathen could have a just idea of, and urging his hearers in all their behaviour in this life to have a principal respect to another, which was to commence when he himself,

himself, after a painful death, to which he knew that he was destined, and his removal from the world, should return, invested with power to raise the dead, and to judge the world, when he would give to every man according to his works.

These are pretensions that no other man besides Jesus ever made ; but with these ideas of his present power from God, and his future great destination, his conduct, and his language, as a public teacher corresponded ; and his hearers, believing this, heard him with suitable reverence and respect.

What other man, to mention but one instance more, would not have exposed himself to ridicule by making such pretensions, and using such language, as the following, (John xi. 25.) *I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. (vi. 40.) This is the will of him that sent me, that every one who seeth the son, and believeth on him, shall have everlasting life ; and I will raise him up at the last day. (Matt. xxv. 31.) When the son of man (by which phrase he always meant himself) shall come in his glory, and all his holy angels with him, then shall he sit on the throne of his glory ; and before him will be gathered all nations, and he will separate them*

*them one from another, as a shepherd divideth the sheep from the goats, &c.*

The most astonishing proof of extraordinary authority assumed and exercised, by Jesus was, his driving the buyers and sellers out of the outer court of the temple at the time of a public festival, when that use had, of course, been made of it time immemorial, and with the permission of the rulers of the nation. This he did with only a whip of small cords to drive out the oxen and other cattle ; when as we read, (Mark xi. 15. *He overthrew the tables of the money changers, and the seats of them that sold doves ; saying ; It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer for all nations, but ye have made it a den of thieves.* This was done without opposition, remonstrance, or delay.

When this was done the scribes and pharisees asked him by what authority he had done it, and *who gave him that authority ;* but they declining to answer a question that he put to them, he refused to give them any answer. We do not, I will venture to say, in all history, read of an act of authority equal to this by any private person, and a person without any relations or patrons conspicuous for wealth or power ; and yet this bold unauthorized action was never alleged against him as a breach  
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of the peace, or produced against him at his trial. We only read (Mark xi. 18.) that *the scribes and chief priests heard it, and sought how they might destroy him. For they feared him, because all the people were astonished at his doctrine.*

But independently of this superior *authority* with which Jesus always delivered himself, the *subjects* of his discourses and exhortations were far more serious and weighty than those of Socrates. Indeed, some of those that are recorded by Xenophon are so exceedingly trifling, that we cannot help wondering that a writer of such judgment and good sense should have thought it worth his while to relate them. Some of those of Jesus are, no doubt, of much less importance than others; as when he advises persons how to place themselves at table where there are many guests of different ranks, &c. and observations and advices of far less importance than even this are not unbecoming Socrates, Jesus, or any man in proper circumstances. For the gravest characters are not always speaking, as we say, *ex cathedra*. In the ordinary situations of human life, when nothing very serious is expected, but mere good humour and good sense, even innocent pleasantry is well received.

But

But the great inferiority in all heathens with respect to *knowledge*, especially concerning God, providence, and a future state, made it absolutely impossible that the moral discourses of Socrates should have the clearness, the weight, and importance, of those of Jesus. The comparison of their discourses in this respect shews the great superiority of the system of religious truth that was familiar to all Jews, as contained in their sacred books, to any thing that was known to the most enlightened of the heathens, among whom Socrates shines with a distinguished preeminence.

To resort once more to the conduct of Socrates and Jesus. Socrates behaved with great propriety and dignity at his trial; but it was by no means equal to the behaviour of Jesus in similar circumstances, though it is probable that he was wholly unacquainted with the forms and solemnity of courts of justice, especially those of the Romans, which would have thrown many persons intirely off their guard; whereas Socrates had himself sat as a judge in one of the most important criminal causes that was ever brought before any court of justice. But Jesus replied to the interrogations of Pilate the Roman governor, as well as to those of the

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Jewish high priest, with the greatest presence of mind, and the utmost propriety; having the prudence and self command, to make no answer at all to questions that were improper, and required none. This he did in a manner that astonished Pilate himself.

The readiness of Jesus to die after a hasty and most unjust condemnation, was certainly not less to be admired than that of Socrates, though the death of the latter was the easiest possible, and not in the least disreputable; being that to which the first citizens in the state, if sentenced to die, were brought: whereas that to which Jesus was sentenced was at the same time the most painful and the most ignominious.

Socrates had a very humane and compassionate person to administer the poison to him, shedding tears when he delivered it; and with great propriety Socrates spoke kindly to him on the occasion. But it is most probable that the Roman soldiers who nailed Jesus to the cross did that office as they generally did, without any feeling of compassion, and perhaps with mockery, as they had treated him before. And yet it is probable that at the very time when they were putting him to the greatest  
pain,

pain, he pronounced that admirable prayer in their favour, (Luke xxiii. 24.) *Father forgive them, for they know not what they do*, there being no particular guilt in their doing that office.

Rousseau, though an unbeliever, was struck with the great difference between the cases of Jesus and Socrates in their last moments, and describes them in the following energetic manner. "The death of Socrates, who breathed his last in philosophical conversation with his friends, is the mildest death that nature could desire ; while the death of Jesus, expiring in torment, injured, inhumanly treated, mocked, and cursed by an assembly of people, is the most horrible one that a mortal could apprehend. Socrates while he takes the poisoned cup gives his blessing to the person who presents it to him with the tenderest marks of sorrow, Jesus in the midst of his agonies prays—for whom? for his executioners. Ah! if the life and death of Socrates carry the marks of a sage, the life and death of Jesus proclaim a God."

## SECTION

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As the worship of Socrates was, nominally at least, directed only to Jupiter, Juno, and the other gods that were acknowledged by his country, it was hardly possible for him not to retain such ideas as were generally entertained of them ; and notwithstanding his endeavours to divest his mind of every thing in their character that must have appeared unworthy of divinity, such is the power of association, that it was impossible he should ever do it completely ; and if not, his reverence for the objects of his worship must have fallen infinitely short of that which Jesus, and the Jews in general, had for their God ; and every sentiment of devotion must have partaken of that imperfection. Their love, or attachment to them, their dread of their power, their devotedness to their will in doing, and their resignation to their will in suffering, the sense they had of their constant dependence upon them, and of their presence with them, must have been very little compared with the same sentiments in the mind of a pious Jew, with respect to the one great object of his worship.

This must be apparent to any person who will read the book of Psalms, and compare those devotional compositions with any (if there be any such) of a similar nature composed by heathens. But  
there

there was nothing in the religions of the heathens, at least among the Greeks and Romans, that could inspire any sentiments that deserve to be called *devotional*. This striking difference no person will say was owing to any superiority of genius in the Hebrew poets, and therefore it must have been owing to superior knowledge ; and this superior knowledge could not have had any source but from divine revelation. Without this the Hebrews would, no doubt, have been as absurdly superstitions as any of the neighbouring nations ; and consequently their ideas of the power and providence of God as little proper to inspire sentiments of true devotion.

To persons of reflection, and acquainted with the state of the heathen world, and especially their turn of thinking and acting with respect to religion, there needs no other evidence of the truth of revelation than a comparison of the hymns in honour of the heathen gods by Callimachus, and other Grecian poets, or the *carmen seculare* of Horace, with the psalms of David, and other devotional parts of the books of scripture, with respect to justness and elevation of sentiment, and correspondent sublimity of language.

government over them, which no person can say is impossible, or improbable, he could not take any other method than that of miracles to gain his end.

Much has been said about Socrates referring Alcibiades to a *future instructor*, as if he had been sensible of the want of supernatural communication, and that he hoped for, and expected it. But supposing Plato's account of the conversation, (p. 295.) to be depended upon, which it certainly cannot, I can by no means infer so much from it. After expressing the uncertainty men are under with respect to proper requests to the gods, he tells Alcibiades that "he must wait till some person inform him (*τις μάθῃ*) how he should conduct himself both with respect to the gods and to men."

When, in reply to this, Alcibiades expresses much importunity to be informed who this teacher was, taking for granted that it was some man (for he says "I would gladly know who this man is,") Socrates only says, that "it was one who cared much for him," meaning probably that he was much his friend; "but that at present a degree of darkness hung over his mind, which must first be dispersed." I therefore think it most probable

probable that he meant *himself*, but that he thought his pupil not then sufficiently prepared to receive farther instruction on the subject.

3. We see in the case of Socrates himself, as well as in that of the people of Athens in general, the strong attachment which the heathens had to the rites of their ancient religions. To disregard them, and to adopt other rites, was punishable with death. The Athenians, as well as other nations, occasionally adopted the worship of other gods, and other gods, and other modes of worship, but individuals were not allowed to do it. It must be done by the authority of the state, and at Athens it was by the court of Areopagus. On this account the apostle Paul, who was said to endeavour to introduce the worship of strange gods, and a new religion, was brought before this court.

But though heathen nations sometimes adopted other rites, they never abandoned their ancient ones. There does not appear to have been any example of this in all antiquity. Nor can we wonder at this, when it is considered, that in all heathen countries, the prosperity of the state was thought to depend upon the observance of the religious rites of their ancestors, the founders of the respective states. No principle appears to have been more  
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fixed in the minds of all men than this. We see it in the extreme reluctance with which some of the most absurd and indecent rites, as the Lupercalia at Rome, were given up. And to the very last, the more learned, and therefore, it may be presumed, the least superstitious of the Romans, constantly upbraided the christians with being the cause of the decline of the empire, by the introduction of their new religion.

This attachment of the heathens to their religion was necessarily increased by its entering into all the customs, and confirmed habits, of common life; some rite of a religious nature being observed from the time of their birth to that of their death, and in fact from the morning to the evening of every day. Every entertainment, public or private, was tinctured with it. No act of magistracy could be performed without it; and in countries the most advanced in civilization the public festivals, in honour of their gods, were very numerous. It will be seen in *Potter's Antiquities of Greece*, that not less than sixty-six of them were observed by the Athenians, and several of them were of some days continuance. And in general there was so much in them of festivity and amusement, bordering, to say the least, on licentiousness, that they were very fascinating to the common people. When

When it is considered how discordant and inconsistent all this was with the principles of christianity, so that when any heathen became a christian he must change every habit of his life, as well as his opinions; that let him live ever so privately, he could hardly pass a single day without the change being observed, and that at the birth of a child, a marriage, or a funeral, it must have been conspicuous to all his neighbours, and the whole city, though he might have found some excuse for not attending the public sacrifices, and other rites of a visible nature, and though he should not have thought himself obliged (which all christians are) to make an open profession of his faith, *confessing Christ before men*, we shall not wonder at the difficulty with which this great change must have been made, any more than at the alarm that was taken when many converts were made to christianity, and the consequent persecution of christians, as seditious persons, *men who turned the world upside down*, (Acts xvii. 6.) their principles tending to the ruin of all states.

While the christians were few, and generally considered as converts to judaism, which was universally tolerated, and while they behaved in a very

peaceable inoffensive manner, they might not give much alarm, notwithstanding their singularities; but when they were observed to be numerous, they would not fail to give alarm to all heathen governors. They were then exposed to the most unrelenting persecution, except where the acting magistrates were secretly disposed in their favour.

The rapid progress of christianity in these circumstances will ever appear the most extraordinary thing in the history of the world. It appears from the epistle of Paul, that in his time there were christian churches in all the more considerable cities in the eastern part of the Roman empire. In the time of the emperor Trajan, the younger Pliny, then governor of Bithynia, complained that the rites of the ancient religions were generally discontinued in his province; and in the space of about three hundred years so numerous and respectable were the christians become, in the whole extent of that vast empire, that the emperors themselves found they might safely declare themselves christians.

To account for the rise and progress of christianity, and the overthrow of heathenism, and this without violence, in the whole extent of the Roman empire, in so short a space of time, is a problem that no unbeliever has seriously attempted to solve,

solve, except Mr. Gibbon may be said to have endeavoured to do it. But his observations on the subject are so exceedingly futile, that they discover equal prejudice and ignorance, ignorance of the common principles of human nature, of the nature of heathenism, and of the state of the heathen world. I proposed to enter into the discussion of this important subject with him, but he petulantly declined it, as may be seen in the letters that passed between us relating to it, published in the *Appendix to the first volume of my Discourses on the evidence of revealed religion*, and also in the *Life of Mr. Gibbon* by one of his friends. At my time of life I cannot engage in this, or any other controversy; but I earnestly wish, as a friend to important truth, that some learned and candid unbeliever (and such I doubt not there are) would engage in it. He would find christians enow equally learned and candid to discuss the question with him.

4. Neither Socrates nor Jesus were writers, and there seems to be more of dignity in their characters in consequence of it, as if they were not very sollicitous about transmitting their names to posterity; confident, that as far as it was an object with them, it would be sufficiently done by others. All the accounts, therefore, that we have of them come

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from



from their disciples and friends. And there is a remarkable difference in the manner in which the life of Socrates is written by Xenophon, and that of Jesus by the evangelists. There cannot be a doubt but that the evangelists had a much higher opinion of their master than Xenophon or Plato had of theirs. The traces of this are numerous, and indisputable; but there is not in their writings any direct *encomium*, or *praise*, of him, as there is in the Greek writers of Socrates; and yet without any assistance of this kind a reader of moderate discernment cannot help forming a much higher idea of Jesus than he does of Socrates from the *facts* recorded of him, and the *discourses* ascribed to him.

Indeed, we have no example of such simplicity in writing as that of the scriptures of the Old and New Testaments in all the heathen world; and it is not easy to account for the difference, especially with respect to the later writers; except that Moses having begun to write in this simple manner, the succeeding writers, having no other model, naturally followed that; inserting in their compositions nothing that appeared superfluous, as direct encomiums are, when the facts from which such encomiums are drawn, are before the reader; who may be supposed as capable of drawing a proper inference from them as the writer himself. As

As the sacred writers say nothing directly in praise of those whom they most esteemed and admired, they say nothing directly in dispraise, or censure, of those whom they most disliked, but leave the circumstances they simply mention to make their natural impression upon their readers. And from the effects of these two different modes of writing, the *natural* and the *artificial*, as they may be termed, the former appears to be better calculated to answer the purpose of the writer than the latter. When a man directly praises or censures another, we suspect some previous bias for or against him, and are upon our guard ; but when we read a simple narrative of facts, without any explanatory remarks of the writer ; we have no suspicion of any thing unfavourable to truth. We think we see with our own eyes, and hear with our own ears, and that we thus judge for ourselves.

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My father to shew how little stress he laid on a casual opinion, has directed me to add the following sentence concerning the Demon of Socrates—from his second tract in answer to Dr. Linn, and to insert it at the end of the section relating to Socrates.

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As to the Demon of Socrates, on which you urge me so closely, I professed not to have any fixed opinion about it. If I had been asked what I thought of it a short time before the writing of my pamphlet, I should have said, as you do, it was probably nothing more than his own good sense, but on considering his character more particularly, I was unwilling to think that such a man would persist through life, and to his dying moments, in telling a lie. And what the Supreme Being might please to do by or with him, or any man, neither you nor I can tell. But I never said, as you now quote me, that "God spake to Socrates by a demon," which you call, (p. 75,) "a glaring deformity of my assertion. Such an idea never occurred to me. As my opinion on this very unimportant subject is unsettled, it is very possible that I may revert to my former opinion, and yours about it.

# ON PLATONISM.

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## INTRODUCTION.

**P**LATO was the professed disciple of Socrates, and attended him eight years. His attachment to him appears by the sum that he raised to procure his release from imprisonment, and his eagerness to speak in his defence at his trial. The veneration in which he held his memory is evident from his making him the principal speaker in many of his dialogues; and the person who delivers his own sentiments in them.

After the death of Socrates, Plato travelled in quest of knowledge, first into Italy, where he conversed with the disciples of Pythagoras, and afterwards into Egypt, where, being known to be a person of considerable distinction in his own country, he appear to have been received with great respect, and from the Eastern part of the world in which it  
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is said he travelled in the disguise of a merchant, he seems to have got some knowledge, directly or indirectly, of the system that generally prevailed there.

That he should expect to learn something in countries out of the bounds of Greece is not extraordinary, as it is acknowledged by him, that "what the Greeks knew concerning the gods, and their worship, was derived from the Barbarians." But he says (Epinomis.) "what the Greeks learned of the Barbarians we have improved." Notwithstanding this acknowledgment, he is willing to ascribe more merit to the Greeks than to them, when he says (Ib.) that "though there is the greatest difficulty in the invention of these things, we hope that all the Greeks will honour the one God in a better manner than the Barbarians, especially as instructed, and warned, by the Delphic oracle" (Ib.) so that, in his opinion, the Greeks had divine instruction as well as human.

He farther acknowledges that, in the early ages, "the Greeks entertained very imperfect ideas of the gods and their worship, having low ideas of their characters, which they did well to correct. Because in time past, he says (Ib.) our ancestors formed wrong opinions of the gods, and their  
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“progenies, as if they had been animals, we should now treat the subject differently.” In this he alludes to the marriages of the gods and goddesses, and their reputed offspring, in other gods, and also in their acceding to the popular notions, adopted and embellished by the poets, which gave him such offence that we shall find he proscribed their writings, and excluded them from his commonwealth. Indeed, these notions of the vulgar were rejected by all who pretended to philosophy, or superior knowledge, in Greece, from long before the time of Socrates, as we have seen already and to the latest period of it.

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#### SECTION I.

##### *Of God and his Providence.*

The being of a god, or of gods, for Plato uses both the phrases promiscuously, he generally takes for granted. Occasionally, however he introduces arguments for his opinion, especially (De Legib. lib. 10.) from the consideration of the structure of the earth, the sun, the stars, and the whole universe. “How could bodies of such magnitude,” he says. (Epin.) “perform their circuits without god. I therefore

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“therefore assert that god is the cause of this, and  
 “that there cannot be any other.” He also argues  
 “from the variety of seasons, dividing time  
 “into years and months, and also from the con-  
 “sent of all nations, Greeks and Barbarians.”  
 (De Leg. lib. 10.) But according to him, and in-  
 deed all the heathen philosophers without excepti-  
 on, the *matter* out of which the world was made,  
 was not created by god, but found by him; having  
 existed from eternity as well as himself, but in a  
 confused disorderly state, such as was generally  
 termed *chaos*. The being of a God, or gods, Pla-  
 to thought to be so evident, that he says (Ib.)  
 “No person persists in his disbelief of the gods  
 “from youth to old age.”

There is a great air of piety in the writings of  
 Plato; and this, no doubt, contributed to make  
 his philosophy so well received by the early chris-  
 tians. In a letter to Dion (Epist. 4.) he says, “by  
 “the favour of the gods things go well.” The  
 same pious language occurs again in the same let-  
 ter. That he preferred the term god to that of gods  
 is evident from his letter to Dionysius, of Syra-  
 cuse (Epist. 13.) in which he informs him that,  
 in his serious letters he begins with the term *god*,  
 but

but that in those in which he was not serious he uses the term *gods*. This, however, is no guide to us with request to his dialogues, so that we are left to distinguish his real sentiments from those speakers to whom he gives the advantage in the argument, which, however, is sufficiently apparent.

Notwithstanding Plato's great admiration of Socrates, he did not confine himself, as Socrates did, to that philosophy which is of practical use in life, tending to rectify the dispositions of men, and inciting them to such virtues as would make them useful members of society, but indulged in various speculations concerning the nature of God and the universe, and in a manner that his master would not have approved. Indeed, on these great but obscure subjects he is in many respects perfectly unintelligible.

According to Plato, the universe was constructed by the supreme being, whom he frequently distinguishes by the title of (*αγαθος*) without the instrumentality of any subordinate being, according to a pattern of it previously formed in his own mind. But there is great confusion in his account of these *ideas in the divine mind*, (which he, no doubt, borrowed from the Pythagoreans as was observed before) so that he sometimes makes them

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a second principle of things, and distinguishing between what is *sensible* from what is *intellectual* in man; and considering all that we see here as the object of the *senses*, he supposes these ideas to be invisible to the senses, but comprehended by the intellect; and though they exist in the divine mind, the intellect of man has free access to them. He therefore calls them *things intelligible*, and says that what we see here are only the shadows of them, and changeable, whereas those intelligible ideas are the only things that are unchangeable, and permanent. The great object of philosophy, according to him, is to raise the mind to the contemplation of these higher, intelligible, and permanent, objects.

Aristotle ascribes this view of things to Heraclitus. "The doctrine of *ideas*, he says, is advanced by those who were convinced by Heraclitus, that sensible things are always flowing, and changeable; so that if there be any such thing as *real knowledge*, which was supposed to require a *fixed object*, there must be things of a different nature from those that are the object of our senses. They must be fixed, there being no proper knowledge of things that are flowing." (Metaph, Lib. 12. Cap. 4.)

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To this doctrine Plato seems to allude when he says (De. Leg. Lib. 10.) "All see the body of the sun, but not the soul that animates it; Not being the object of any of our senses, it is seen by the mind." All the meaning that I can make of this doctrine of ideas, perceived by the intellect, and not by the senses, things not fluctuating and variable, as the objects that we converse with are, is that they mean what we call *abstract ideas*, as those of horses, men, trees, &c. divested of the circumstances of colour, size, place, &c. which always attend individual objects; and in this there is no great mystery, but still every actual idea has some peculiarity or other, as well as real objects.

On this mysterious doctrine of ideas, which were personified by the later Platonists, and made a kind of *second god*, the immediate author of the creation, was founded the doctrine of the *christian trinity*, as I have shewn at large in my *History of Early Opinion concerning Jesus Christ*. The mischief that has arisen from false metaphysical principles has been most extensive, affecting every article of christian faith and practice, as may be seen in several of my writings. Indeed, no branch of science has wholly escaped this subtle and baleful influence. Happily, however, good sense is at length

length prevailing over every thing that is not founded on reason and truth; and with this, though seemingly foreign to the subject of religion, we are deriving that light which exhibits christianity in its best and purest state, as it came from Christ and the apostles, who knowing nothing of heathen philosophy, or metaphysics, delivered the plainest truths in the plainest language, though they have since their times been most strangely perverted by an unnatural mixture of heathen principles, and heathen superstition.

Notwithstanding the absurdity of Plato's metaphysical notions concerning the nature of God, and his relation to the universe, his ideas of his *attributes*, and of his *providence*, were in general just and excellent, agreeing with those of the scriptures.

Having frequently represented the Supreme Being as the friend of virtue, and the enemy of vice, he says, (De. Leg. Lib. 10.) "God cannot have the disposition that he hates. God approves of those who resemble himself, and is angry (*νεμεσά*) with those who are unlike to him. But nothing is so like God as a good man..... He is the most sacred of all things," (Alcib. 2.) meaning that he has the nearest relation to divinity.

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The term by which he generally characterizes the Supreme Being is in the singular number, viz. the *Good*, (*αγαθόν*) vindicating his most essential attribute. "Evil," he says (Rep. 3.) "cannot come from God," and in (Rep. xi.) "we must look to some other than God for the cause of evil." This principle, however, he did not carry so far as the Stoics, who maintained that God was incapable of *anger*, so that he would not punish even the wicked. On the contrary, Plato represents the Supreme Being, though termed *the Good*, as no less *just* than merciful. "That there are gods," he says (De. Leg. Lib. 10.) "and that they are good, and respect justice more than men, is the best introduction to a body of laws." After denominating him, "the beginning, the middle, and the end, and the supporter of all things," he says (De. Leg. Lib. 4.) "he is always accompanied by justice, and punishes those who depart from the divine law. The humble follow him quiet and composed, but he that is elevated by his riches, his beauty, or any other advantage, as if he stood in no need of a guide, is deserted by him; and though such a person may appear enviable to man, in the end he destroys himself, his family, and the state." Agreeably to this, he

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says,

says, (De. Leg. Lib. 10.) "Let not the success of wicked and unjust men, who, though not truly happy, are generally reputed to be so, and who are extolled in poems and discourses, drive thee rashly into impiety; nor be disturbed though they should continue so to old age, and this prosperity should extend to their children. Nor be thou angry with the gods who permit this, or think that they neglect the affairs of men; for they will not be exempt from punishment after death."

Veracity is another moral attribute that Plato ascribes to God. "The nature of God, and of demons," he says, (De. Rep. Lib. 2.) "admits not of falsehood; for God is altogether simple, and true in his words and actions. He neither changes himself, nor can he deceive others, by vicious speeches, or omens, to men sleeping or awake." This he says by way of censure on Homer, who represents Jupiter as acting in this deceitful and unworthy manner, disgraceful to a man, and much more so to a God. To the divine character in this respect he seems to allude, though with much obscurity, when he says, (De. Rep. Lib. 6.) "As light and our view of it, are not the sun, but the resemblance of the sun,

"so

“ so knowledge and truth are the image of *the Good*, “ but not the Good,” meaning God. The majesty of the Good itself is greater. Agreeably to this honourable idea of the divine character, he says that “ the offerings to God,” meaning those that are most acceptable to him, “ are honour, veneration, and gratitude,” (Euthyphro.)

But notwithstanding this, we shall see that, like all the other heathen philosophers, Plato strongly recommends a conformity to the idolatrous rites of religious worship established in his country, and even the rigorous punishment of all that did not conform to them ; so far were they from following the light they really had, and so little prospect was there of the world in general being enlightened, and and reformed, by their instructions.

The writings of Plato contain several just and beautiful illustrations of the providence and moral government of God. “ God,” he says, (Politicus) “ is the shepherd of mankind, taking the same care “ of us that a shepherd does of his sheep and oxen. “ He takes care (De. Leg. Lib. 10.) of the smallest “ things as well as of the greatest. None of the “ causes of neglect in men can take place with respect to God. We all acknowledge,” he says,  
I 2. (Ib.)

(Ib.) "that the Gods see every thing, that they are  
 "all powerful and good, yea the best possible, nor  
 "can they be affected by idleness or fear. They,  
 "therefore, cannot despise or neglect any thing be-  
 "cause it is small. Besides, there is more diffi-  
 "culty in seeing, and disposing of, small things  
 "than of great ones."

"The universe," he adds, "belongs to God,  
 "and he will not neglect what is his own. He  
 "cannot be called a wise physician who only at-  
 "tends to the body in general, and not to the par-  
 "ticular parts. Nor do governors of cities, or  
 "masters of families, neglect small things. Ar-  
 "chitects also make use of small stones in laying  
 "the larger ones. And let us not think that God,  
 "who is the wisest of all, is less wise than man.  
 "Besides man is a worshipper of the gods," and  
 "therefore more deserving of his attention and  
 "care.

To shew that the Supreme Being is incapable of  
 being diverted from the just administration of af-  
 fairs by any unworthy motive, he says (De. Leg.  
 Lib. 10.) "To say that the gods are easily appeas-  
 "ed, is to compare them to dogs or wolves, which  
 "are pacified by giving them part of the plunder,  
 "and then suffer them to worry the sheep. Cha-  
 "racters

"rioteers are not to be bribed, nor are commanders  
 "of armies, or physicians, nor are husbandmen  
 "or shepherds to be deceived in this manner, nor  
 "even can crafty wolves thus deceive dogs. And  
 "are the gods the greatest guardians of the great-  
 "est things, and are the keepers of the greatest  
 "things worse than dogs, or men of moderate ca-  
 "pacity, who never act unjustly deceived by the  
 "bribes of unjust men?"

There is hardly any advantage that men are  
 possessed of that Plato does not ascribe to the gods,  
 and to their good will to men. "It appears to me,"  
 he says (Philebus,) "that God sent gifts to men by  
 "Prometheus, together with fire. It is not by  
 "art," he says, (Epin,) "but by nature, and the  
 "favour of the gods, that we cultivate the earth."  
 He makes God the author of friendship, by dispos-  
 ing dispositions that are similar, and formed for  
 friendship, to unite. (Lysis,) "In the forming of  
 "states," he says, (De. Leg. Lib. 4.) "we must  
 "begin with invoking the gods, that they may be  
 propitious to us, and assist us in making laws."  
 And after representing the advantage of the right  
 worship of the gods, as the most important of all  
 things to be attended to, he says, (Epin.) "No man  
 "can rightly teach this without the assistance of

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"God."



He even ascribes to divine inspiration the great things that eminent statesmen do for their country, without understanding the nature, or foreseeing the consequences of them, adding, that "all good men are in some sense divine." (Meno.)

It must have been among the Pythagoreans that Plato learned what he writes, but in a manner that is very unintelligible, concerning *numbers*, of which their philosophy made great use. It seems most probable that by metaphysical reasoning they made the Supreme Being to be represented by *unity*; and as all numbers consist of unity repeated, and after thus proceeding from it are resolvable into it again; so all things, after proceeding from their *first cause*, will be resolved into it. But this is not the only use that Plato, no doubt after the Pythagoreans, made of this comparison. But whatever be the knowledge that we derive from this source, Plato ascribes it to God. "We affirm," he says, (Epin.) "that numbers are the gift of God, and on them all the arts of life depend, but this no prophet (*μάντις*) can comprehend. Whatever is wicked and irregular is deficient with respect to number. Many animals cannot learn from their parents the use of numbers. It is God that gives us this power. The excellent  
"ancient,

"ancients," he says, (Philebus) "who were nearer to the gods than we are, taught us that the universe consists of *one* and *many*, which always has been, and ever will be. The resemblance of numbers dissimilar in their nature, when reduced to a plane, is evident; and this to a person of understanding must appear not to be a human, but a divine wonder" (Epin.) We do not, however, find, that this mysterious doctrine of numbers was taken up by any of the succeeding sects of philosophy, so that it probably died with Plato.

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## SECTION II.

### *Of the Polytheism of Plato.*

With all Plato's knowledge of the divinity, of his attributes, and his universal providence, and of his preference of the term *god* to that of *gods*, when he is treating of the divine nature, he was, like all heathens, a polytheist, and like them an advocate for the strict observance of the idolatrous rites of his country.

He seems to have learned the doctrine of two principles in the East, from his sayings (De. Leg.

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Lib. 10.)

“dom from every evil. Since, then, neither the death of the body, nor its own depravity, can destroy the soul, it must be immortal.”

That the souls of men are emanations from the Supreme Being, the fountain of all intelligence, seems to have been taken for granted by Plato, but I do not find it distinctly expressed in any part of his writings. He seems, however, to allude to it in a passage that I quoted before. But he generally considers it as retaining its individuality after death; as when he says (De. Leg. Lib. 12.) “In truth the soul of each of us is immortal, and goes to the other gods, to give an account of its actions.” This agrees with his uniform language about the rewards of virtue, and the punishments of vice, after death. Whether souls are to be reunited to their source afterwards, which he probably supposed, as being held to be the necessary consequence of their being originally derived from it, this retribution he must have thought would previously take place.

With respect to the *threefold division of man*, a doctrine held by later philosophers, I do not find any thing clear, or consistent, in Plato. And the term ( $\psi\upsilon\chi\eta$ ) which in other writers signifies the mere *animal principle* in man of which they partake in

common with the brutes, he applies to the highest principle, that of *intelligence* in him, when he says (Alcib. 1.) "The body is not the man, but the soul ( $\psi\upsilon\chi\eta$ ) which makes use of, and commands, the body."

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#### SECTION IV.

##### *Of Virtues and Vices*

On the subject of *virtue and vice* it may be taken for granted that the sentiments of Plato were not, in general, different from those of Socrates; so that it is unnecessary to make quotations from his writings recommending the practice of virtue, and dissuading from that of vice. His belief in the being and providence of God, and in a future state of retribution, must have laid a foundation for piety, and the practice of virtue in general, if what he advances on those subjects were his real sentiments; and the frequency with which he urges them, and the stress that he lays upon them, makes it difficult to believe that they were not.

In these respects he comes nearer to the doctrines of revelation than any other of the heathen philosophers that came after him, even than Socrates himself. But his arguments in proof of the immortal-

ity of the soul, and also those for a future state, are so weak, and they made so little impression on those that came after him, that it is barely possible that he could have been influenced by them himself; and his writings in general have much the air of being calculated to please the generality of his countrymen, with whom those opinions were in some sense popular, and to whom they would, of course, tend to recommend him. And it is evident from his history that he was much more desirous of general applause than his master. On this account there will always remain some doubt with respect to the real sentiments of Plato on these important subjects. Judging of him by his writings, we cannot wonder that his philosophy was held in such high estimation by many of the more learned of the early christians, and that they embraced it in preference to any other.

With respect to the proper objects of men's pursuits in life, Plato says (*Philebus*) that "neither pleasure, nor wisdom, are to be ranked with things that are absolutely *good*, because what is good is perfect, and sufficient of itself," which, he observes will not apply to either of them. But he was far from entertaining the extravagant opinion of the Stoics, in classing both pleasure and pain among

among the things that are absolutely indifferent, unworthy of the attention of a wise man, and incapable of affecting him.

There are three remarkable exceptions to the moral maxims of Plato, in which he would not have had the concurrence of Socrates, viz. his recommending a community of women in his commonwealth, his approbation of perjury in matters of love, and in the licentiousness which he would allow soldiers on a military expedition.

How little must Plato have known of human nature, and human life, when he recommended a community of women in his republic (De. Rep. Lib. 5.) and an education of them the same with men and together with them, even so far as to exercise in the gymnasia naked; saying that nothing that was useful ought to be deemed shameful, that in former times it was thought shameful for men to exercise naked, but that now it was no longer so. Being naturally capable of doing many of the duties of men, such as serving their country both in the army and in civil offices, they ought, he says to receive an education proper to qualify them for those, though they should be exempted from what was most laborious in any of those offices. By

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this means, and sexual commerce being confined to a proper age, which he makes to be thirty for men, and twenty for women, a more hardy race of men he says, would be produced.

These healthy women being accessible to more men, he says, would have more children, though this now appears to be, by a wise providence, contrary to fact, as prostitutes have seldom any children at all. The children thus promiscuously produced he would have nursed and educated together, the stronger, however, in one place, and the weaker in another by women engaged by the state for that purpose, without giving them any intimation concerning their parents. He would not, however, allow of any sexual intercourse between men and their own mothers or daughters, &c. But it is not necessary to follow him through all the details of so visionary and absurd a scheme.

Indeed, the objections to this scheme are so obvious, and so numerous, that it is not worth while to enter into any serious discussion of it. I would only observe that if frequent divorces have been found, as is universally acknowledged, to be attended with much evil, a community of women, which it has always been the very first step of civilization to prevent, must be attended with infinitely more, and greater.

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With how much more wisdom did our Saviour forbid even divorces except on account of adultery. When the change of a partner for life is considered as *impossible*, the most discordant minds reconcile themselves to it, and live together more happily than if they had the liberty to separate, which, in that case, they would upon every trifling disgust be thinking of, and contriving; and this being the case of a whole society, jealousy, and violence in every form, would be unavoidable.

Besides, no mode of education is equal to that which arises from the affection of parents to their own children, and the attachment of children to their parents. This is a source of the purest satisfaction to both, and to the very close of life. And what has any parent to look to in the infirmities of old age comparable to the affection and attention that he may reasonably expect from his own children? What a miserable legislator must that be, who would deprive mankind of the purest source of domestic happiness for any advantage of a political nature? Besides, what is the great object of all true policy; but to give men the secure possession of their private rights, and individual enjoyments?



The second great objection to the moral maxims of Plato is his allowing of perjury in matters of love. "The laws of God," he says, (*Convivium*.) "allow of oaths," meaning a breach of oaths, "in affairs of love. God," he says, (*Hippias Major*.) "pardons those who perjure themselves with respect to love, as if they were children, and did not know what they did." It appears too that the laws of Athens took no cognizance of these oaths. But the law of God, in our scriptures, makes no such distinction. It requires the strictest performance of every oath.

Plato in his books on the Republic, censures with much severity the vice of Sodomy, which was too generally practiced in Greece. "We must abstain," he says, (*De. Leg. Lib. 8.*) "from all commerce with males. For this is being worse than birds and beasts, among which the males have no commerce with other males, but with females only; and if it be not concealed from both men and women, the criminal may be punished by deprivation of all civil offices, and be treated like a foreigner." This, however, is prescribing a very mild and inadequate punishment for the most abominable of crimes.

Notwithstanding, this he says, (*De. Rep. Lib. 5.*)

3.) that "on an expedition soldiers should be allowed unbounded licence both with respect to women and boys, as by this means they will be more inflamed to gain the victory," meaning that with the expectation of this indulgence they will be more ready to enlist, and to engage in any hazardous enterprize.

The laws of Moses and of God relating to war are very different from this. According to them, wherever men are, in peace or in war, the same rules of morality are binding upon them, and the same punishment awaits the infringement of them.

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#### SECTION V.

##### *Of Death, and the Consequence of it.*

In what Plato says on the subject of death, and the consequence of it, we see the stress that he laid on the practice of Virtue in general, though without distinguishing particular virtues or vices; and if he may be understood literally, his sentiments are decidedly in favour of a future state of retribution, in which individuals will retain their separate consciousness, at least till their proper rewards or punishments are completed. But much of what

he advances on this subject has such a mixture of imagination, and of popular notions, that many persons entertain doubts of his writing what he really thought.

“It is impossible,” he says, (Epin.) “that there should be much happiness in this life; but there is great hope that after death every person may obtain the things that he most wishes for. Nor is this new, but known both to the Greeks and Barbarians.” This is the only passage that I have found in the writings of Plato in which he lays any stress on the argument from general consent, or tradition, in favour of the reality of a future state; and here he intimates some degree of doubt, by only saying that there is *great hope* with respect to it. In other places he expresses more.

“In truth,” he says, (De. Leg. Lib. 12.) “the soul of each of us is immortal, and goes to other gods, to give an account of its actions, as the laws of our country express; which gives the greatest confidence to good men, and terror to the wicked, lest they should suffer the greatest punishments after death for the crimes committed in this life. A happy man,” he says, (Epin.) “will learn all that he can from nature, persuaded that thus he will live most happily, and when he dies  
“he

" he will go to a place suited to his virtue ; and be-  
 " ing thus truly initiated, and having acquired  
 " true wisdom, will pass the rest of his life in the  
 " contemplation of the most beautiful objects.  
 " Justice is the best reward of the soul, and we  
 " should not envy it those rewards of justice and  
 " universal virtue, which God has prepared for it  
 " in this life, or the next." " The gods," he adds,  
 " must know who are just, and who are unjust,  
 " and must love the one and hate the other, and they  
 " will give to their friends every good that is in their  
 " power." (De. Rep. Lib. 10.)

Plato introduces one of his speakers in (De.  
 Leg. Lib. 10.) addressing a young man licentious-  
 ly disposed in the following manner. " O young  
 " man, who think that you are overlooked by the  
 " gods, consider that there is a seat of justice with  
 " the gods who dwell in heaven, that they who are  
 " wicked may join the wicked, and they who are  
 " good may join the good, in life and in death, and  
 " do and suffer what others like them do and suf-  
 " fer. Neither, therefore, do you, or any other  
 " person, presume that you will be happy, so as to  
 " escape, or brave the justice, of God. You are  
 " not overlooked by him, though you should go to  
 " the bottom of the earth, or ascend into the hea-  
 " vens,

“vens, but shall suffer according to your deserts,  
“whether here, in the infernal regions, or in some  
“distant place.” This, however, being the address of an old citizen to a young one, may be nothing more than popular language, calculated to reclaim him from his vices, which would be injurious to the state; using such arguments, as whether thought to have any weight by the speaker or not, might make some impression on the hearer.

The state of those who die in battle, in the service of their country, Plato gives on the authority of Hesiod; saying, (De. Rep. Lib. 5.) “If Hædod may be believed, they become terrestrial demons, expellers of evil, and the guardians of mankind.” For this, therefore, he does not make himself responsible.

In his Phædrus Plato gives such an account of the state of souls after death, with the various periods of their purifications and transmigrations, as it is possible he might have heard in the East, but such as it was impossible he could be in earnest in professing his belief of.

“Souls do not,” he says, “return to the source  
“from which they came in less than ten thousand  
“years. For they do not recover their wings till  
“that

"that time, except the souls of those who truly  
 "philosophize, and who love boys," (meaning  
 probably sensual pleasure in general) "and wis-  
 "dom at the same time. These perform it in the  
 "third circuit of a thousand years; if after this  
 "they three times chuse this life, thus recovering  
 "their wings after three thousand years. But other  
 "souls are judged after the first term of life, some  
 "of them going to a place of judgment under the  
 "earth, to suffer according to their deserts, others  
 "ascending to a place in the heavens suited to their  
 "merit when they were in the form of men. These,  
 "after a thousand years take their choice again,  
 "some the life of a brute, and again that of man,  
 "provided it had formerly been the soul of a man.  
 "For souls that have not seen truth cannot assume  
 "that form." This particular period of three  
 thousand years Herodotus had from the priests of  
 Egypt, who said that "when the soul had gone  
 "through bodies of every kind, terrestrial, ma-  
 "rine, and also those of birds, it entered again into  
 "that of a man, and that this was accomplished in  
 "the space of three thousand years. This ac-  
 "count," he adds, "some Greeks, whose names  
 "he forebore to mention, claim as their own."

(Lib. 2. ch. 123. Euterpe.)

Still

Still less can we think Plato to have given any credit to the following very absurd relation, which, however, he recites at full length (De. Rep. Lib. 10.) and without intimating any doubt of its truth. It is the story of one Eris, of Armenia, who after having lain dead on the field of battle twelve days, came to life, and then related what he said he had seen in the infernal regions, the whole agreeable to the fables of the poets, with many absurd additions; as that of the souls of particular persons chusing to pass into the bodies of different animals, that of Ajax into a lion, that of Orpheus into a swan, from his hatred of women, that of Thamyras into a nightingale, and that of Agammemnon into an eagle, &c. &c.

As Plato's account of a future state has such a mixture of fancy and fable, and so little support from *argument*, his declaration of his belief of it will admit of much doubt, as well as what he says of the immortality of the soul in general. They were Eastern doctrines, to this day firmly believed by the Hindoos and others, though Plato gives no intimation whence he had them. But excepting this doubtful case of Plato himself, they never gained any degree of credit in the West.

How happy, then, should we think ourselves,  
and

and how thankful to God, for the glorious light of the gospel, which leaves us under no doubt or uncertainty with respect to a future life in general, or the different conditions of the righteous and the wicked in it ; and especially for that most satisfactory evidence of it in the death and resurrection of Jesus, as furnishing at the same time a *proof*, and also a *pattern* of a future universal resurrection ; when *all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the son of man and come forth, some to the resurrection of life, and others to that of condemnation ; and when all men shall receive according to their works.* What weight has the mere opinion of Plato, or that of any heathen philosophers, admitting them to have been ever so much in earnest, compared to this ?

We find nothing in our scriptures concerning the fanciful doctrine of *pre-existence*, or of the state of souls separate from the body ; but are assured that as *the man* dies, the whole man shall rise again, with a perfect recollection of all that he had done, and therefore satisfied with respect to the state to which he will be sentenced corresponding to it. And this is all that we are at present concerned to know. It follows from this that we shall know our friends as well as ourselves. Jesus assured  
his



his apostles, that then *they should be with him wherever he should be, and see and partake of his glory*, and that this will also be shared by *all who believe on him through their word*, that is all sincere christians to the end of the world. We are also assured that all those who shall *suffer with him* shall also *reign with him for ever*. What ample encouragement is this to a life of virtue, and how will it enable us to bear all the troubles of this life, and the pains of death, be they what they may, with such an expectation. This is such *hope and joy set before us*, as was set before Jesus himself, and by which he was enabled to bear his cross, and to make no account of the shame of that ignominious, as well as painful, death.

OF

OF  
THE PHILOSOPHY  
*of*  
ARISTOTLE.

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*INTRODUCTION.*

ARISTOTLE was the disciple of Plato, but he appears to have been greatly superior to him, and indeed to all the other Grecian philosophers, in genius and good sense. He had also considerable advantage from having been tutor to Alexander the Great, and from being assisted by him in the study of nature, which was wholly neglected by all the other philosophers; as they confined themselves to subjects of mere speculation, which requires little or no knowledge of external things.

Aristotle, however, himself followed them too closely in their own track; and he seems to have taken great pleasure in collecting, and confuting, all their sentiments; in so much that, if he could be depended upon, it would be easy to ascertain the

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opinions

opinions of all the philosophers who had preceded him. But he is said to have greatly misrepresented them, in order to make it the more easy for him to expose and confute them, which it is evident he took much pleasure in doing, that his own opinions might appear the more original and respectable. Never perhaps, was so much genius employed on more useless subjects than in all that we see in the greater part of the writings of Aristotle. The works of Thomas Aquinas, and the christian schoolmen, are, in this respect, far inferior to his; but the subjects are much more important, and the trifling, as well as the subtlety, less.

Though the reading of the disquisitions of Aristotle on theological and metaphysical subjects be unspeakably tiresome, so that, probably, no person in this age, who has any proper idea of the value of his time, will ever read a tenth part of them; many of his conclusions, and summaries, are clear and striking; far more so than those of Plato, without affecting his sublimity, the art of his dialogues, or the elegance of his style; his aim seeming to have been nothing more than to express his own ideas, such as they were, in the most intelligible language. At least, so it appears to me, notwithstanding his acknowledging to Alexander, that  
though

though he had published his opinions, they were in fact not published, as only those who had been particularly instructed by him could understand them.

This may be true with respect to some of his writings, but it certainly is not so with respect to the generality of them ; and of this the extracts that I shall make from many of them will enable the reader to judge for himself, in what he writes concerning the Supreme Being, the human soul, and the nature of virtue and vice ; which are all that, in this work, I propose to consider ; as nothing else in the writings of the heathen philosophers is of such a nature as that it can be brought into comparison with the doctrine of our scriptures ; since the bulk of their writings relate to subjects which probably never entered the thoughts of any of the sacred writers, and indeed were the least important in themselves, being frivolous in the extreme.

It has been usual to class Aristotle among *Atheists*, and his writings, as translated and commented upon by Averroes, in a later period, were the great source of modern atheism and infidelity ; but I do not see any pretence for this charge in the writings of Aristotle himself. For in them the Being and

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rank and nature with the heavenly bodies, or from giving any portion of divinity to them, that he says, (De. Mundo. cap. 6.) "God conducts the stars according to number," that is, with regularity, "and that on this account he may be called their Coryphæus."

Aristotle was even a professed advocate for the unity of God, and as I have observed before, he never, in expressing his own sentiments, uses the term *gods*, but always that of *God*. "There is," he says, (De Mundo. cap. 7.) "but one God, though he has obtained many names, according to his different attributes. By the appellations of ( $\Sigma\upsilon\nu$ ) and ( $\Delta\iota\alpha$ ) united is signified that in him we live. He is Saturn, and Chronos, as having existed from eternity. He is also called the thunderer, the giver of rain, &c. It can only be God that is to be understood in the Orphic hymns. He is also called Fate, from things proceeding in a connected series; and Nemesis, as possessed of a divine power, which he exercises as he pleases; Adrastias, as the cause of every thing in nature, which no person can deceive or avoid; and *Æsas*, because he exists always. What is said of the *Parcæ* must be explained in the same manner. Finally, God, holding the

"begin-

“ of a prince. In this word every thing is to be  
 “ seen, and from this all power of procreation  
 “ flows.”

There are, however, two passages in this work, which, as being sufficiently agreeable to the sentiments of Aristotle quoted above, may deserve to be recited. “ God,” he says (Lib. iii. cap. 3.) “ knows all things, past, present, and to come, as “ their maker and governor, himself remaining “ without motion.” This, however, is not perfectly agreeable to the sentiments of Aristotle, as we have seen. The next passage is not consistent with itself, as it represents the Divine Being as having produced every thing first without any instrumentality of other beings and then with it.

“ The Supreme Creator (Artifex) imitates no  
 “ created being, but produces forms inimitable by  
 “ any. Nor does he make use of any instrument  
 “ in this, but performs every thing by his own  
 “ power. God, therefore, whose name be exalted,  
 “ produced the universe without any consultation,  
 “ or wandering of thought. He first produced  
 “ an only substance, viz. the *acting intellect*,  
 “ which he adorned with light most bright, and  
 “ most excellent of all created things, and by this  
 “ intermediate Being the highest orb was produced,  
 “ which

His account of the relation that God bears to the world, as its supreme governor, is peculiarly striking; considering the little light the heathens had on this most important subject. "What the pilot is in a ship," he says, (*De. Mundo. cap. 6.*) "What the charioteer is in his chariot, what the precentor is in a chorus, what the law is in a state, or a general in his army, God is in the world. What manifold labour, motion, and care, would there be without this." "Whereas with him every thing succeeds without labour, without trouble, or infirmity of body. For, being situated in a steady and immoveable situation, every thing is moved at his pleasure, according to the different forms and natures of things. In this he resembles the law in a state, which, being immoveable, governs every thing in the state, all the magistrates having their proper place and province under it. But he is greatly superior to, and more stable than, our laws. For by him the whole world of heaven is administered and governed. All animals obey his laws, and even reptiles that feed upon the earth."

It will be seen in the following passage that Aristotle had not the same, or equally just, ideas of the operations and providence of God that we are taught  
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in our scriptures. "God," he says, (De. Mundo: cap. 6.) "is the preserver of every thing that is done in the world, and also the author of it, without being affected by weariness, as a human workman, or an animal, and of things at a distance, as well as near. For having his seat in the highest region, from which he is called the supreme (Υπα[σ]χον) those bodies which are nearest to him feel the most of his power; but I cannot think him concerned in things that are low and mean; but that rather, like the king of Persia, he knows and acts by his agents. Thus he moves the sun, and moon, and the whole heavens, and is the author of every thing that is safe and salutary in the world. Not that he stands in need of the assistance of others, as he does every thing without difficulty, with a simple motion." (De Mundo. cap. 6.)

I would observe on this, that philosophy, as well as true piety, considers every thing in the universe as, in a proper sense, *equal* in the eye of God, who made the smallest things as well as the greatest, as equally subservient to his purpose. Moses represents him as having made by the exertion of the same power, reptiles as well as men, the grass of the fields as well as the largest trees, and all these



## SECTION II.

*Of the human Soul.*

Though Aristotle writes very largely concerning the soul, and, according to his custom, proposes and answers a variety of subtle questions relating to it, his sentiments on the subject are by no means evident, except that they are different from those of Plato, who preceded him, and those of the Stoics who came after him. Indeed, on all subjects he seems to have taken pleasure in differing from all others, and appearing as the author of a system of his own.

Though Aristotle did not, with many other philosophers, consider the soul as the whole of *a man's self* he acknowledged it to be the principal part of a man. (*αρχη*) "It is so," he says (*De Anima*. Lib. i. cap. 1.) "of all animals. The intellect" (*Ib.* Lib. iii. cap. 4.) "is immiscible with the body, "but the latter has its senses, as the instruments of it." He did not think so meanly of the body as not to be of opinion that it had some properties in common

mon with the soul. "The soul," he says (*De Anima*. Lib. i. cap. 1.) "has all its affection in common with the body, as anger, gentleness, compassion, confidence, joy, hatred, and lastly love; because in all these cases the body suffers as well as the mind."

The motion of the intellect is always *said* to consist in *thinking*, so that when this operation ceases the soul ceases to exist. He, therefore says, (*Ægypt*. Lib. viii. cap. 4.) "the intellect is always in motion, and an equable one."

According to a metaphysical distinction of Aristotle, and I believe peculiar to him, every substance consists of *matter* and *form*. "What then," says he "is the essence of the soul" (*Ægypt*. Lib. xii. cap. 13.) "If it is said to be *form*, it is said wisely and rationally, being part of the compound, and not the whole." These two last quotations are from that work of Aristotle which I have observed to be of doubtful authority. I find, however, a better (though the account is not so clear) in his (*De Anima*. Lib. iii. cap. 4.) where he says, "They think justly who are of opinion that the soul is to be classed with forms. It is not, however, wholly place, but intellectual, nor does it consist in *act*, but in the *power of the forms*." This

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last expression is to me wholly unintelligible. But the opinion that the soul is the form of the body, whatever was really meant by it, was the common language first of the christian Aristotelians, and then of unbelievers, on the revival of the Aristotelian philosophy in the West. It was condemned at the twelfth council of Lateran.

Like all other philosophers, Aristotle considered the soul as consisting of different parts, each having its peculiar functions. "Nothing," he says (*De Anima*. Lib. ii. cap. 2.) "is very clear concerning the intellectual or contemplative part of the soul; but it seems to be another kind of soul, and that this is separable" (meaning from its other faculties) "immortal, and incorruptible. The soul" he says, "is divisible (*Mag. Mor. Lib. i. cap. 5.*) into two parts, that which has reason, and that which is without reason, (which he must have learned from the Pythagoreans.) In the part which has reason, are the virtues of prudence, wisdom, genius, memory, &c. but in the part which has not reason, temperance, fortitude, justice, and what ever else is praise worthy in the class of virtues; since on account of these we are deemed worthy of praise." Here he gives to a part of the soul the same properties that other philosophers more generally

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rally give to the animal part of man, of which, however, he makes no distinct mention, though he does of another part, which he calls *vegetative*, not acknowledged by any others; who in their definitions of man never descend lower than the principle of animal nature. "A part of the soul," he says (De Anima. Lib. ii. cap. 2.) "we call vegetative, of which plants partake, for the soul is (*αρχή*) the principle of all vegetative, sensation intellect and motion."

What Aristotle is represented as saying in the doubtful treatise mentioned before, favours the idea which prevailed at the revival of his philosophy, of a *common principle of life and motion*, tho' not directly, of *intelligence*, pervading all nature, and resolvable into its source at the death of each individual. "Plants and animals," he says (*Ægypt. Lib. viii. cap. 2.*) "besides that soul which is peculiar to each, enjoy the life of the common soul; because they cannot give aliment to others without parting with their own lives. The first author of form," he says (Ib.) "gave reason to the common soul." He even says that this is the *principle of life*, though he does not call it a *soul*. It is in all the elements, "in fire, air, and water." Here however he allows a separate individual soul

to each, besides a participation in the common soul.

The doctrine of the *pre-existence of souls* and of their descent into mortal bodies, I do not find mentioned in any of the genuine writings of Aristotle ; but it is mentioned, in the doubtful treatise quoted above, in the exordium to which he says (*Ægypt. Lib. i. cap. 1.*) “ We shall then describe the descent of souls into bodies, and their ascent.” But I do not find that he does this in any part of this treatise.

Concerning the state of the soul, or of the man, after death, Aristotle is nearly silent ; and what he does say, or rather hint, is expressive of much doubt. “ If any thing,” he says (*De Moribus. Lib. i. cap. 11.*) “ be enjoyed by the dead, whether good or evil, it must be very little, either in itself, or to them ; not sufficient to make them happy or unhappy, who were not so before.” This with respect to the souls, or the shades, of the virtuous, is pretty nearly the sentiment which Homer puts into the mouth of Achilles in the Elysian fields ; who says, he had rather be a slave to the meanest person upon earth, than king of all in the regions below.

#### SECTION

## SECTION III.

*Of Happiness, and of Virtue and Vice.*

Aristotle's ideas of happiness, and of things that should be classed among *goods* or *evils*, are very different from those of the Stoics who came after him, and, as may be inferred from what he says, those of many who preceded him; but they are far more agreeable to reason and the common sense of mankind.

In consequence of his making more account of the body than other philosophers of his time did, he justly observes (*De Moribus. Lib. i. cap. 4.*) that “if good be *one*, which he says is the common opinion, or a thing separate from every other, and independent of every other, it cannot be procured by man, or depend upon any actions of his. “Some kinds of good,” he says, (*Mag. Mor. Lib. i. cap. 3.*) “relate to the soul, and the virtues, and some to the body, as health, beauty, and other external things, opulence, &c. It is agreed by all,” he says, (*Eudem. Lib. vi. cap. 13.*) “that grief (*λυπη*) is an evil, and to be avoided. For whatever is to be avoided is an evil, and whatever

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“ is to be pursued is a good. It is not easy” he farther says, “ for him to be completely happy, who “ is either remarkably deformed, or of mean condition, or who lives a solitary life, or is without children ; and much less if he have children that “ are very profligate. Some, therefore, place happiness in outward prosperity, and some in virtue. “ He, therefore, must be pronounced happy, who “ is both virtuous, and possessed of external “ goods.” (De Moribus. Lib. i. cap. 9 and cap. 11.) In this opinion he would now, I believe, have the general concurrence of mankind.

On the subject of *virtues and vices*, the ideas of Aristotle are peculiar to himself, but he was certainly at liberty to make his own definitions, though this may lead to mistake when they are different from those that are commonly received.

Now virtue is, I believe, universally considered as the property of the soul, independent of any thing relating to the body, and only on the will and intention, arising from the inward disposition of the mind. But it is not so with Aristotle. He considers every circumstance that is *reputable*, and that makes a man appear to advantage in the eyes of others, as a virtue, (*ἀρετή*) and every thing that is disreputable, as a vice. His general definition (De Virtutibus.)

Virtutibus.) is that whatever is commendable is virtuous, and vice the contrary.

Thus, under the head of liberality, besides what we call *generosity*, he includes “neatness in dress, “elegance in a house,” and this, he says, “without any regard to utility. He also is to be classed “among the liberal who keeps animals for pleasure, “or for the sake of being admired.”

After mentioning Plato’s division of the soul into three parts, he assigns the virtues peculiar to each of them. “Of the *rational* part of man,” he says, “the virtue is prudence, of the animal “(*θυμοειδους*) the virtues are gentleness, and fortitude; of the concupiscible part, (*επιθυμητικου*) “the virtues of temperance and continence; and “those of the whole soul are justice, liberality, and “magnanimity.” (De Virtutibus et Vitiis.) I do not, however, find the above mentioned division of the faculties of the soul in the works of Plato.

Aristotle’s ideas of justice were much more extensive than those of most other philosophers, or perhaps those of statesmen. “The first justice,” he says (De Virtutibus) respects the gods; the “next the demons; then those relating to our country and our parents, and the last the dead, in

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“which



“ which is included piety, which is either a part of justice or follows it.”

This is the only passage in the works of Aristotle in which mention is made of *gods*, and here he evidently means such gods as were acknowledged by his country. However, the neglect or contempt of these rites of worship, whatever they were, he would have punished. “ It is injustice,” he adds, (Ib.) “ to violate the custom and institution of our country, and not to obey the laws and the magistrates.” This includes the principle of persecution for religious opinions and practices, which Aristotle, no doubt, held, in common with all the philosophers and magistrates of his time, so that nothing better could reasonably be expected of him.

Thus we have seen the result of the speculation, and laborious researches, of the most acute and sagacious of all the Grecian philosophers, of a man who, with respect both to genius and industry, may be classed among the first of mankind, on these most important subjects. But notwithstanding marks of superior good sense, and discernment, in the writings of Aristotle, we do not find in them any real advance in theological or moral science. And as to any *practical use* of his doctrines, it appears to be something

something less than the world was in possession of before.

As to the great object of heathen philosophy in general, which was to enable men to bear the evils of life, and the fear or the pains of death, he never, that I recollect, so much as mentions the subject ; but treats of generation and dissolution merely as natural phenomena, to be explained upon physical principles, but he never regards them in a moral light. On the consequence of death, and a state of retribution after it, he is likewise wholly silent ; probably from not believing any thing either of the notions of the vulgar, or the refined speculations of Plato. Had the subjects been much upon his mind, he must have treated of them, and with seriousness, as in themselves highly interesting to himself ; as well as to the rest of mankind.

What is peculiarly remarkable in Aristotle, is that though he *reasons* much, and disputes with wonderful subtlety, he seems to have *felt* nothing. He never expresses himself with any warmth, or any degree of sensibility, when he is treating of the most important subjects ; but writes concerning God, and the soul, and of virtue and vice, with as much coolness as he describes his plants and animals. How different, in this respect, as well as in

many others, are the writings of Aristotle from the Psalms of David, the writings of the prophets, and other devotional and moral articles in the books of scripture, penned by men of no uncommon ability of any kind, but deeply impressed with the importance of the subjects on which they write, and having more knowledge of them. They know infinitely more of God, and of his constant attention to the affairs of men, individuals as well as nations, and therefore they write as if they were really sensible of his presence with them, and his unremitted attention to them, as the proper author of all the good and evil that fell to their lot. They regarded him not only as their moral governor, and final judge, but as their father, and their friend; and thence were led to address themselves to him on all interesting occasions.

What is there, in this respect, in all the heathen writings to compare with the language of the Psalms? To quote a few verses out of thousands, I shall just transcribe the beginning of the 116th. Psalm. *I love the Lord because he has heard my voice, and my supplications. Because he has inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live. The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell got hold upon me. I found trouble*  
and

*and sorrow, then called I upon the name of the Lord, O Lord I beseech thee, deliver my soul. &c. &c.*

I am tempted to add the beginning of the 139th Psalm. *O Lord thou hast searched me and known me. Thou knowest my down sitting and my uprising. Thou understandest my thoughts afar off. Thou compassest my path, and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me. It is high, I cannot attain unto it.*

This is language that comes from the *heart*, implying a feeling sense of the intimate presence, and constant inspection, of God, naturally producing a *direct address* to him, which does not appear ever to have been made by any of the philosophers. Their feelings, therefore, must have been very different. Supposing them to have been the same in *kind*, they must have been unspeakably different in *degree*. Their acknowledgment of the universal presence of God must have been mere speculation, and rested, as we say, in head, but never reached the heart. But this strikes us in every psalm of David.

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men, was the belief of the Stoics, as well as of Socrates. "God," says Marcus Antoninus, (Lib. xii. sect. 2.) "sees all minds divested of their coverings and flesh. By his own mind alone he sees them as derived from him. If you will do the same, you will be freed from much trouble." For believing that all minds are only parts of one whole, he ascribes to them all much of the same power, as we shall see more particularly hereafter.

He, however, takes it for granted that all good and evil is the dispensation of the gods, and therefore he holds it as a fixed maxim to be thankful for the former, and patiently to bear the latter. "I thank God," he says, (Lib. i. sect. 17.) "for good grandfathers, good parents, good preceptors, good acquaintance, domestics, and friends, and for good of every other kind. If," says he (Lib. vi. sect. 44.) "the gods take no care of the world, which it is impiety to believe, why do we sacrifice, pray, take oaths, and do other things which suppose the gods to be present with us, and attentive to us?"

The heathens in general, without excepting any of the philosophers, except Epicurus, were disposed

posed to believe that the gods interposed in the affairs of man, giving him admonitions, and suggestions by dreams, omens, oracles, and various other ways. "With respect to the gods," say Marcus Antoninus (Lib. i. sect. 17.) "their suggestions, and the aids, and inspirations that come from them, nothing hinders my living according to the rule of nature, unless it be my fault, in not ob-serving those hints from the gods, which are sometimes obscure."

He seems sometimes, however, to consider such an order of things established from all eternity as would render all prayer, sacrifices, &c. useless. "Whatever happens to you," he says, (Lib. x. sect. 5.) "was destined for you from all eternity. This" he says, "was done, (Lib. iv. sect. 26.) by a certain fate." And again, "the series of causes combined with one another, connects your existence with that event from all eternity." This, however, is the belief of Jews and Christians, and according to their ideas is not incompatible with prayer. But it is doubtful whether Marcus Antoninus entered into the proper principle of this, so as to make prayer perfectly compatible with his idea of fate. It does not appear that the Stoics in general, any more than other heathen philosophers, had

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had their minds exercised in prayer, habitual and occasional, in the manner of pious Jews and Christians. We should otherwise have had more of their devotional compositions, similar to those of the psalms of David, and other forms of prayer that occur in the books of scripture. The difference between the heathens and the believers in revelation in this respect is so striking as I observed before, as proves a very different state of mind with respect to a God and providence, whatever may be inferred to the contrary from occasional expressions in their writings.

That every thing that was appointed and directed by the Supreme Being is right, Marcus Antoninus never doubted. "If there be a God," he says, (Lib. ix. sect. 29.) "every thing is right." According to him, this made the existence of any thing properly *evil* absolutely impossible. "No thing," he says, (Lib. x. sect. 6.) "can be hurtful that is good for the whole; and every thing in the universe must be good for it. This is common to the nature of every thing, and the world must have it in the greatest degree, because there is nothing external to itself to force any thing noxious upon it." This consideration is with us also an argument for the unchangeable

ble goodness, and other attributes, of God, the evidence of which we see in the works of nature. We say that, since there are evident marks of *benevolence* in what we experience and see around us, a principle of *malevolence*, which is opposite to it, cannot be admitted. Every thing, therefore, must have been designed for the best, whether at present we can see it to be so or not. And as there is nothing in nature superior to this benevolent supreme intelligence, this system, tending in all respects to good, must be perpetual.

That this system is in a progressive state of continual improvement was not the doctrine of the Stoics. It was rather their opinion that, after a certain period, every thing would return to the state in which it had been before ; so that nothing would be gained by their perpetual revolutions. In this their system coincided with that of the Hindoos, and the oriental philosophers. This seems to be intimated by Marcus Antoninus. " We should bear in mind," he says, (Lib. ii. sect. 14.) " two things, one that all things have " been from eternity in a perpetual round. There " is in it no difference between seeing the same " things a hundred years, two hundred years, or in " a longer duration." How dull and unpleasant is



this prospect compared to that which is suggested in our scriptures ; according to which nothing will ever return to the state in which it has been before, but every thing will continually advance in improvement, without, however, ever reaching *perfection*, which must ever be the exclusive prerogative of the Supreme Being.

The duty of absolute submission to the divine will, and the order of nature, as coincident with it, cannot be inculcated more forcibly than it is by the Stoics. "Man," says Marcus Antoninus, (Lib. xii. sect. 12.) "should do nothing but what God himself would approve, and he should receive willingly whatever he assigns him. With respect to every thing that is agreeable to nature, the gods are not to be blamed, for they do nothing wrong with design." "The principal article of piety towards the gods," says Epictetus, (sect. 31.) "is to have just opinions concerning them, as that they exist, and administer every thing well and rightly, and that it is our business to obey them, and acquiesce voluntarily in every thing that takes place, as being disposed for the best." Treating of death, Marcus Antoninus says, (Lib. vi. sect. 10.) "If every thing be ordered by providence, I venerate the supreme ruler,  
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“and, depending upon him, am unmoved.” From his opinion of the duty of submission to the divine will, he excellently observes, (Lib. ix. sect. 40.) “the gods either have power, or no power. If they have no power, why do you pray? If they have power, why do you not rather pray that you may be without anxiety about an event, than that the event may not take place?” This may instruct even a christian.

It was the opinion of all the heathens, from the earliest to the latest times, that it was right, and even necessary, to adhere to the religious rites of their ancestors; since the prosperity of the state they thought depended upon it. On this principle, absurd and groundless as it apparently is, it was that the wisest and best of the heathens acted. It was on this principle that Marcus Antoninus, Trajan, and some others, the best disposed of the Roman emperors, wished to exterminate the christians, in order that the rites of the antient religion might not grow into disuse, to the endangering of the state. “It is every person’s duty,” says Epictetus, (sect. 31.) “to make libations, offer sacrifices, and first fruits, according to the custom of his country, not sordidly, or negligently, nor above our means.”

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The good sense, however, of Marcus Antoninus taught him that there might be an excess, and superstition, in this external worship. For he commends a person (Lib. vi. sect. 30.) for being "religious without superstition." He also says (Lib. vi. sect. 23.) "In all things pray for the divine aid, and consider that there is no difference how long we are doing this. Three hours thus passed may suffice." He does not, however, say for what space of time these three hours would suffice.

Like Socrates, the emperor connected the practice of morality with religion; though with this, the religious rites of states, those on which their prosperity was thought to depend, had no connection whatever. "It is of much consequence," he says, (Lib. x. sect. 8.) "to remember that there are gods, and that they do not wish men to deceive them, or to flatter them, but to imitate them. He that fears pain, (Lib. ix. sect. 1.) fears what must be in the world, and this is impious; and he who follows pleasure will not refrain from injustice, which is certainly impious."

## SECTION

## SECTION II.

*Of the Human Soul.*

Hitherto we have found the principles of the Stoics what may be called *sublime*, and in a great degree rational, as there is but little to correct in their ideas of the supreme intelligence, of his universal providence, or the obligation they maintain that all men are under to conform to its will, and acquiesce in its decisions, as necessarily right and good. But we shall now find them deviating very far from truth and common sense, and leading themselves and others into errors of a practical nature, as we proceed to consider their ideas concerning the *mind of man*, the disposition to be cultivated in it, and the essentials of moral virtue.

The Stoics held the doctrine of *three principles in man*, viz. his *body*, consisting of gross matter, the principle of mere *animal life*, called by them (πνευμα) or (ψυχη,) and the proper *intellectual principle*, called (vous.) The difference between men and other animals appeared to them to be so great, that they could not believe the latter to be possessed of the highest principle of human nature.

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But as men have every thing that belongs to brutes, in which they acknowledge some thing superior to mere *matter*, they were under a necessity of making the component parts of man to be three.

Moreover, as they considered all matter as fundamentally the same, though forming different substances, they conceived the animal principle to be the same in all, flowing from a common source, to animate particular bodies for a time, and then, like the breath to which it was generally compared, mixed with the origin from which it was derived.

In like manner, having no idea of a proper *creation*, i. e. *out of nothing*, they considered the highest principle in man, viz. that of intelligence, as the same in all, derived from the same source; and this they conceived to be the supreme intelligence, which disposed and directs the affairs of the whole universe, and like the principle of animal life, they held that, being detached from this source at the birth of every man, it was absorbed into it again after his death, as a drop of water (to use a comparison that is frequent with them) is absorbed and lost in the ocean. Consequently, its separate existence, and separate consciousness, then vanished.

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According to this philosophy, therefore, the souls of men are so many portions of the divinity; and this led the professors of it to ascribe to them the properties and powers of divinity, making them sufficient for their own happiness, independently of every thing external to them. And, as the supreme intelligence is incapable of suffering from evil of any kind, they transferred this extraordinary power to the soul; maintaining that nothing foreign to itself could affect it without its own consent, so that it is in every man's power to be completely happy, whatever his outward circumstances may be.

This sentiment, which has an air of great sublimity, tended to inspire the Stoics with a sense of native dignity, rendering them superior to every thing mean and base; but it excluded humility, and many amiable and useful virtues, peculiarly adapted to the state of society with beings equally imperfect with themselves. Their sentiments however, on this subject so nearly connected with morals, led them to express themselves with respect to the common accidents of life in a manner that, with a little qualification, is truly admirable and edifying. But when taken literally their language justly shocks a christian, who feels his own weakness,

These ideas of the great power, and natural independence, of the mind were suitable to the opinion of its high origin and final destination, as having been originally part of the supreme universal intelligence, and destined to be absorbed into it, and to become part of it again. "It belongs," says Marcus Antoninus, (Lib. vii. sect. 55.) "to the mind to be free from error and defect. Neither fire, nor external violence, nor calumny, nor any thing else can reach the mind when, like a sphere, it is compact within itself (Lib. viii. sect. 41.) The soul endued with reason has the following powers, (Lib. xi. sect. 1.) it sees itself, it forms and limits itself, it makes itself whatever it pleases. Whatever fruit it produces it reaps itself; whereas other persons gather the fruits of trees, and also whatever is produced from animals. It always gains its purpose, at whatever time its life terminates; so that it is not, as in a dance, or a play, in which the action is sometimes interrupted by incidents, and is therefore imperfect. But wherever it is taken, what precedes is complete and perfect; so that I may say, I have every thing that belongs to me within me. Add to this, the mind traverses the whole world, and what surrounds it. It contemplates its form, and

“and looking forward into eternity, it considers  
 “the renovation of the universe at certain inter-  
 “vals.”

An essential prerogative of the mind of man, and of the most use in the conduct of life, the Stoics considered to be its *command of thought*, and by this means its total independence on every thing foreign to itself; since it is under no necessity of giving any attention to them. “How can opinions,” says Marcus Antoninus (Lib. vii. sect. 2.) “be abolished, unless thoughts suitable to them be extinguished, which you may for that purpose call up whenever you please. I can think of any thing that I have occasion for; and if I can, why should my mind be disturbed?”

Thus these philosophers flattered themselves with the idea of their happiness being wholly independent on any thing foreign to the mind, and that it became them to maintain a perfect indifference towards every thing that is the object of affection, or respect, to other men. “If you behave” says Epictetus (sect. 15.) “with becoming indifference towards children, wife, the magistrate, riches, &c. &c. you will be worthy of being a guest of the gods; but if you can despise all these things that are foreign to yourself, you will not only be  
 “a com-



“ a companion with them, but a god yourself. Thus Diogenes, Heraclitus, and others like them, deserve to be called, and really were, *divine*.” It is surely hardly possible to carry extravagance and absurdity farther than this; so far, however, we see that a false philosophy, pursued to its natural consequences, can carry men from every thing that we are taught by daily experience and observation of common life. And yet these were men of deep thought and reflection, and both Epictetus and Marcus Antoninus lived in the world, and had to do with men and their affairs.

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### SECTION III.

#### *Of Virtue and Vice.*

The great use of religion, and of moral philosophy, is to furnish the mind with proper rules of life, by the observance of which we shall best secure our own happiness, and be the most disposed to promote that of others, to enable us to bear the evils of life with the least pain, and the prospect of death without terror. On all these three heads, therefore, I shall examine the merit of the Stoical philosophy, and compare it with the christian.

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The dignified sentiments maintained by the Stoics concerning the human soul lead us to expect great elevation of mind with respect to virtue; and in this we shall not be disappointed, as far as virtue in their ideas of it extended; and it comprehended every thing that relates to the due government of the passions, all the relative duties, and those that affect the intercourse between man and man. They also made happiness to depend entirely on the practice of virtue, independent on any foreign consideration, such as the fear of punishment, the hope of reward, or the opinion of others, expressed in praise or censure.

Marcus Antoninus, having observed that it is in the power of man to be happy in any situation, and especially in one that suits him, says (Lib. v. sect. 36.) "If you ask what this proper situation is, I answer, that it consists in good morals, a good disposition, and good actions. It is a pleasure to a man (Lib. viii. sect. 26.) to do what suits his nature, and it suits the nature of man to be kind to his countrymen, to command the emotions of his senses, to distinguish what is probable in what is before him, to contemplate the nature of the universe, and the things that are agreeable to it. Do nothing" he says, (Lib. xi. sect. 18.)

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“ for the sake of admiration, but be the same when alone as if you were before others.” For he justly observes (Lib. xii. sect. 4.) “ We fear more what others think of us, than what we think of ourselves.” Agreeable to this, Epictetus says (sect. 23.) “ If your thoughts be employed in external things, and you wish to please any person, you err from the path of life ; whereas in all cases remember that you are a philosopher, and that you appear so to yourself, though not to others.”

The Stoics carried the principle of disinterestedness to the highest pitch, beyond the bounds of reason or nature, expecting no reward for their virtues either in this life, or any other, except the satisfaction of their own minds ; and this was short of any proper pleasurable sensation. For, according to their general system, nothing of this kind ought to be indulged. “ When you confer a favour” says Marcus Antoninus (Lib. ix. sect. 42.) “ is not this sufficient, without any reward ? Does the eye require a reward for seeing, or the feet for walking ? So man, who is made to do good, should be satisfied with the good that he does.”

These extremely rigid maxims, so much above the comprehension of the vulgar, led them to consider

sider the practice of virtue as the peculiar privilege of philosophers, and real happiness as much more so. For who besides philosophers could be expected to despise every thing that was foreign to themselves, and to consider every thing on which the comfort of life depends as included in this class; and without this there is, according to them, neither real virtue or true happiness, as will be more evident in the farther developement of their principles.

Some philosophers were poor, as Epictetus himself, who was even some time in servitude; and in an age in which books were scarce and dear, and learning not easily attained, some of them might not be able to read. In this case Marcus Antoninus says, (Lib. viii. cap. 8.) "If you cannot read, you can abstain from abuse, even of the ungrateful, and also be kind to them. You need not be heard to complain of your situation, or envy that of others." Happily, however, these virtues and every other may be attained without philosophy.

Unhappily, the Stoics considered every thing that is foreign to the calm dictates of reason, all emotions and passions, as belonging to mere animal nature; seeing that men have them in common

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with brutes. They, therefore, thought it a point of magnanimity and duty in man to suppress every thing of this kind with respect to others, as well as themselves. Do not," says Marcus Antoninus, (Lib. vii. sect. 43.) "join others in their lamentations, or be moved by them." Epictetus, however, makes some little allowance for the weakness of human nature when he says (sect. 16.) "If you see a friend in distress, accommodate yourself to him so far as to lament and groan along with him, but take care that you groan not inwardly."

These maxims, I need not say, are as remote from the dictates of nature, as they are from the precepts of scripture, which bids us to be *kindly affectioned one to another, with brotherly love*, and from this principle *to rejoice with them that rejoice, and to weep with them that weep*. How can men be supposed to *act*, but as prompted by their *feelings*?

Though Marcus Antoninus advises to do good to a man's fellow citizens, and even to the ungrateful, it was not, according to his principles, to be dictated by any *affection*, as that of *love*, but only because it was the part of man, and became him to act in this manner; as it was for the eye to see, or the feet to walk. But christianity knows nothing of the

the distinction of the different component parts of man, and the natural superiority of one of them to the rest. Paul, though he expresses a wish that his brethren might be *sanctified in body, soul and spirit*, it was only in allusion to the three fold division of man above mentioned, which was familiar to the Greeks, to whom he was writing, desiring that, whatever they considered as belonging to man, or part of him, it might be sanctified, as a suitable temple for the spirit of God. He was not declaring his own principles, as a Jew, or a Christian.

The opinion which the Stoics maintained of the superior excellence of the intellectual principle in all men was such, that they considered every emotion or passion that led to vice as foreign to it, as arising only from the principle that is common to men and brutes; and therefore not from any thing that was properly a man's self. In consequence of this, they professed to have no indignation against the vices of men, but considered them like evils, and inconveniences of any other kind, at which it does not become any man to be disturbed, being agreeable to the order of the nature.

Accordingly, Marcus Antoninus having observed that we have no reason to complain of the gods with

respect to any thing that befalls us, adds (Lib. xii. sect. 12.) "Neither are men to be complained of. For neither do they offend willingly. It is the part of man (Lib. vii. sect. 22.) to love those who offend them; and this he will do if he recollect that all men are related, and that when they offend, it is when they do not know it, or do it against their wills. When I consider that the person who injures me (Lib. ii. sect. 1.) is a partaker of the same intellect, and portion of the divinity, that I cannot be injured by him, that he has no power to draw me into any thing dishonest, I cannot be angry with him, or hate him."

The Stoics were led into these sentiments, and this conduct, by considering every man as wholly independent on every other, each being separately sufficient for his own happiness, and incapable of interfering with that of any other. "Does any person offend me," says Marcus Antoninus (Lib. v. sect. 25.) "let him look to it. He has his own dispositions and actions, and I have what nature wills me to have, and I do what is agreeable to nature." Again he says, (Lib. iv. cap. 26.) "Does any person injure me. No, he injures himself. If you suffer (Lib. ix. sect. 42.) through fraudulent, faithless, injurious, persons, "consi-

“consider that there must be such men in the  
 “world, and you will bear with them. When  
 “you take any thing ill (Lib. xii. sect. 25.) you  
 “forget that every thing takes place according to  
 “the nature of the universe. If we consider these  
 “things only as evils which depend upon our own  
 “wills, we shall see no reason for blameing, or bear-  
 “ing ill will to, any man.”

Besides this great indifference to the vices of  
 other persons, as injuring only themselves, that of  
 fornication was never considered by any heathens  
 philosophers, or others, as one, any farther than it  
 was found to be injurious. This is evident from  
 the advice that Epictetus gives (sect. 33.) “Ab-  
 “stain as much as you can from venery before  
 “marriage. If not, do it as the laws permit, but  
 “do not find fault with others who are not conti-  
 “nent, or boast that you are so.”

How short is this of the purity required of chris-  
 tians, who are taught to consider fornicators, as well  
 as adulterers, thieves, &c. excluded from the king-  
 dom of heaven, and how little attention must these  
 philosophers have given to the natural consequence  
 of venereal indulgence without the bounds of mar-  
 riage; how ill it qualifies men to be affectionate



husbands, and fathers, and that in many cases it must indispose men to marriage in general. There was also this inconsistency in their maxims in this respect, that fornication was always reckoned infamous in the female sex ; so that women of character never associated with known prostitutes. The christian catalogue of both virtues and vices is far more copious than that of the heathens, which was defective with respect to duties of every kind, those that are commonly said men owe to themselves, and to society, as well as those that we owe to God, notwithstanding that of submission to his will, which is one of the great excellencies of the maxims of the Stoics ; as this was founded chiefly on its being merely taken for granted, without considering any particular evidence of it, that every thing in the universe, and the government of it, must be right. For the wisdom of providence in the permission or appointment of evil is never mentioned by Marcus Antoninus. That such things as evils of every kind *must be*, is the amount of all that he says on the subject ; and that they do not affect any person who considers these as foreign to himself. He says nothing of the beneficial tendency of the things that we call evil, and complain of in the system, obvious as this tendency is now seen to be. Marcus

cus Antoninus would *bear* tribulation, but the apostle Paul *rejoices* in it.

The maxims of the heathens were still more defective with respect to sufficient *motives* to the practice of virtue, in the fear of future punishment, and the prospect of future reward ; and all other motives will have but little hold on the bulk of mankind, especially if they be already engaged in bad habits. On such persons, a disinterested respect to virtue, so much insisted upon by Marcus Antoninus, cannot be expected to have any influence.

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#### SECTION IV.

##### *Of the various Evils of Life.*

Another great use of religion and philosophy is to enable men to bear the various evils incident to them in life with as little inconvenience as possible ; and accordingly this was a principal object of the philosophy of the Stoics, far more than it was with any of the other sects. In this respect their pretensions went very high indeed, far, as we shall see, beyond the bounds of reason and nature ; so that daily experience, one would have thought, must

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have

have convinced them of their mistake. Notwithstanding this, they resolutely maintained their favourite, and indeed fundamental maxims, of indifference to every thing foreign to themselves, (meaning the intellectual principle in them only) which enjoined patience under, and even insensibility to, all that mankind in general complain of, and call *evils*.

On this principle they held that, without its own consent, the mind could not be affected by any thing. "I learned," says Marcus Antoninus (Lib. 1. sect. 8.) "of Apollonius to regard nothing besides mere reason, to be the same in the most acute pain, in the loss of children, and in diseases of long continuance." So also Epictetus says, (sect. 1.) "If the things that disturb you be not in your power, have it ready to say, This is nothing to me. And if you consider that only as yours which is yours, and what is foreign to you as foreign to you, no person will constrain or hinder you. You will complain of no man. You will do nothing against your will. You will have no enemy, nor suffer any thing disagreeable to you."

This

This opinion of the nature and powers of the mind, and of things that were, or were not, foreign to themselves, an opinion on which so much depended, they conceived to be easily formed by those who had been taught to philosophize, so as to be readily applied on all occasions. It was only the office of *thought*, than which nothing is more easy to *mind*, the property of which is to *think*. In this respect they made no difference between the most painful sensations and impressions, corporeal or mental, though in these we find that the mind is absolutely passive; they supposing all sensations and emotions were to be referred to the merely animal part of man, on which they maintained that the mind was wholly independent; so that whatever impression might be made from without, it was in its power to relieve itself.

Consequently, they held that pleasure and pain of every kind are not to be classed among things that are either good or evil. Marcus Antoninus says (Lib. ii. cap. 11.) "Life and death, honour  
 "and ignominy, pain and pleasure, wealth and poverty, may be equally considered as good or evil;  
 "since they are neither honourable nor dishonourable, and are therefore neither good nor  
 O 5. "evil\*."

“evil\*.” But the difficulty consists in being fully convinced of this, and regarding that as indifferent in contradiction to the actual feelings of themselves, as well as of the rest of mankind. Of this, however, they made very light.

“Reject opinion,” says Marcus Antoninus, (Lib. xii. sect. 25.) “and you are safe; and what hinders your doing this, when any thing happens that is disagreeable to you? you forget that this happens

*\* There is a passage in the Table of Cebes, who was a disciple of Socrates, in which this sentiment of life and death, health and sickness, being to be classed among things indifferent to happiness occurs. But it must have been added by some person who, if not a Stoic, must have lived long after the time of this Cebes. “Life,” he says, is not to be classed among the goods or the evils; because it is enjoyed alike by those who live well, and those who live ill. The same may be said of cutting and burning; for these operations are usefully employed by those who are sick and those who are well. Neither is death an absolute evil; because it is sometimes preferred to life by the brave; nor health, or sickness, riches, or any other seeming advantage; because they are often of no real use.”*

“ happens according to the nature of the universe.  
“ Take away opinion,” he says (Lib. iv. sect. 7.)  
“ and complaint is removed. Whatever does not  
“ make a man worse, or his conduct worse, cannot  
“ injure him internally or externally.” And a-  
gain, (Lib. vii. cap. 14.) “ If I do not consider a-  
ny thing that befalls me as an evil, I am not in-  
jured, and it depends upon myself whether I think  
“ so or not. How easy,” says he, (Lib. v. sect. 2.)  
“ to remove every imagination that is troublesome  
“ or inconvenient, so as to preserve the mind in  
“ perfect tranquility. In pain (Lib. viii. cap. 28.)  
“ the soul may preserve its tranquility, and not  
“ think it to be an evil. Every thing of the nature  
“ of opinion, inclination, and appetite, is within us,  
“ where nothing that is evil can come. Remove  
“ imagination,” he says, addressing himself “, and  
“ it is in my power that no vice, no irregular de-  
“ sire, no perturbation, exist in my mind ; but, re-  
“ garding every thing as it really is, to make use of  
“ it according to its value. Remember that this  
“ power is given to you by nature. So Epictetus  
says (sect. 30.) “ No person can hurt you unless  
“ you will. Then only are you injured, when you  
“ think you are so.”

In a more particular manner they made light of  
every

every thing that affected the *body* only, for which, as consisting of brute matter, they professed the greatest contempt, as if it had borne no relation whatever to the mind, which they considered as the only proper seat of good or evil, true pleasure or pain. "Nothing," says Marcus Antoninus, (Lib. iv. sect. 39.) "that is an evil to you, depends upon any change that takes place in that in which you are inclosed. If the body be cut, burned, or putrefy, only let that part of a man which forms its opinion concerning it be at rest, that is, not consider that as good or evil, which may happen either to good or bad men. For whatever happens alike to him that lives agreeably to nature, or contrary to it, is a matter of indifference. You may pass your life (Lib. vii. sect. 68.) without injury, and with the greatest cheerfulness, though wild beasts tear the limbs of the body that surrounds you, and adheres to you."

The language in which they sometimes express this indifference to the body is amusing, and might have been said by way of ridicule of their system. "Pain," says Marcus Antoninus, (Lib. viii. sect. 28.) "is an evil to the body. If it is so, let the body look to it. As to the limbs of the body, (Lib. vii. sect. 33.) if they be in pain, let them take  
"care"

“care of it, if they can do any thing.” Again (Lib. xii. sect. 1.) “Let the flesh with which you are surrounded mind its own sufferings.” “If the reason,” says Epictetus (sect. 18.) “forebode any ill, immediately reply, it may be to your body, your reputation, your children, or your wife. Every thing fortunate is intended for me, if I please. For whatever happens to me, is in my power, and I may derive advantage from it.”

However, besides this great sheet anchor, as it may be called, of the Stoics, by which they procured their tranquility in all the storms of life, viz. their idea of the absolute independence of the mind upon every thing external to it, and its sufficiency for its own happiness, they occasionally mention other considerations not peculiar to themselves, some of more, and some of less, weight. Among others, Marcus Antoninus says, (Lib. vii. sect. 33.) “If pain cannot be borne, it will cease, and if it be of long continuance, it may be borne ; and in the mean time the mind, by means of its opinion, may preserve its tranquility.”

Another of his resources is not so reasonable. “Think with yourself,” he says (Lib. viii. sect. 36.) “that nothing past or future, but only that  
“ which



“ which is present can be the cause of uneasiness  
“ to you.” This is by no means true with respect  
to beings capable of reflection, whose happiness or  
misery necessarily depends much more on the past  
and the future than on the present moment. It is  
only a brute, or a child, to which this observation is  
applicable, nor even to them completely, or long.

One rule of Epictetus, however, is truly valuable, if it could be applied. But the Stoics always  
imagined that much more was in their power than  
really was so. “ Do not (sect. 8.) seek to find things  
“ as you wish them to be, but wish for that which  
“ actually is, and you will pass your life in tranqui-  
“ lity.” The great difficulty in this case (but to  
this the Stoics gave no attention) is in the applicati-  
on of such a rule; and other principles, out of the  
sphere of their philosophy, but comprehended in  
those of christianity, are necessary to assist us in  
this.

This great excellence of character, which raises  
some men so much above the level of their species,  
and which rendered them superior to all the evils  
of life, and also to the fear of death, the Stoics a-  
scribed wholly to philosophy; so that it required  
much study and reflection to attain it, though af-  
terwards the exercise of it was easy. “ The time  
“ of

“ of human life,” says Marcus Antoninus (Lib. ii. sect. 17.) “ is a point ; nature is in a continual flux, the senses are obscure, the body liable to corruption, &c. &c. the only thing” (that is of value) “ is philosophy, which consists in preserving the mind intire, superior to pleasure or pain, self-sufficient, having nothing to do with what others do or do not do, and receiving the things that befall them as coming from the same source with themselves.” “ It is a mark,” says Epicetetus (sect. 48.) “ of the common people to look for loss or gain from what is external to them, but the philosopher expects nothing but from himself. The proof that he is a philosopher, is, that he censures no person, commands no person, complains of no man, never boasts of himself, as a person of any consequence. If he meets with obstacles from his acquaintance he blames only himself. If any person praise him he laughs at him, and if he be censured he does not excuse himself.” &c.

If only such persons as these be philosophers, they will never be very numerous. Indeed, we must not look for them among *men*, not even those who make the greatest profession and boast of this very philosophy ; because it could not be in their  
power

power to divest themselves of the common principles of human nature. We see, however, in these extremely absurd maxims, how far metaphysical or general principles can carry men, at least in speculation; and therefore of what importance it is to form just ones, agreeable to the real principles of human nature; for such only can lead to the proper duty and happiness of man.

That the Stoics, however, found more difficulty than they were willing in general to allow, in reducing their maxims to practice, appears from their frequently inculcating the necessity of having proper rules, or remedies, at hand for every case that might occur. "As surgeons," says Marcus Antoninus (Lib. iii. sect. 13.) "have their instruments ready for every operation, so have you your maxims ready, by the help of which you may distinguish divine and human things," meaning probably, things within our power, and those that were out of it. "There is no retirement (Lib. iv. sect. 3.) so complete as that into one's own mind, especially if it be well stored with maxims, by the consideration of which it may attain perfect tranquillity. And by this means it is in a man's power to remove every cause of uneasiness." "Whatever occurs to you," says Epictetus (sect. 10.)

"have

“ have some principle ready to oppose to it. If  
 “ you see a beautiful boy or girl, have recourse to  
 “ continence, if labour the enduring of it, if re-  
 “ proach patience. By this means appearances  
 “ will not mislead you.” “ In pain let this consi-  
 “ deration be at hand,” says Marcus Antoninus,  
 (Lib. vii. sect. 64.) “ that it is not disgraceful, or  
 “ makes the governing power” (the mind) “ at all the  
 “ worse, and that nothing that is either material, or  
 “ that relates to other persons, can injure it.”

How greatly superior, and how much better adapted to the real principles of human nature, and the common feelings of men, are the consolations of our religion, to those of this philosophy ! In the scriptures the idea of the Divine Being is that of the universal parent, our father in heaven, who never afflicts his children but for their benefit. *He does not, we read, afflict willingly, nor grieves the children of men. Yea as a father pitieth his children, the Lord pitieth them that fear him. He knoweth their frame and remembers that they are dust.* With respect to the wicked, he is represented as forbearing to punish with severity, waiting for their repentance and reformation, which is the sole object of the discipline to which they are exposed ; *not being willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*

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providence, of a supreme intelligence, whether it resided in one subject or many. Indeed, on this all their distinguishing maxims, especially that of the soul of man being a portion of this intelligence, and retaining its powers, depended. Other philosophers held various opinions on this subject. Arrian gives the following account of them.

“Concerning the gods,” he says, (Lib. i. cap. 12.) “some say there are no gods; others that they exist, but take no care of any thing; others that they exist, but take no care of any besides celestial things; others that they attend both to celestial and terrestrial things, but only in a general way; others, like Ulysses and Socrates, say that we cannot even move without God.” Arrian himself proves the being of a god from the wonderful frame of the world (Lib. i. cap. 6.) He even supposes that God made the *sun*, which Marcus Antoninus, and the heathens in general, supposed to be itself a deity. “Can that God who made the sun, and guides it,” he says (Lib. i. cap. 14.) “a small part of his works compared to the universe, not see all things.” Seneca also says (Ep. 41.) “such a system as this could not stand without the support of the deity. When you are most alone,” says Arrian (Lib. i. cap.

cap. 14.) "God is within you; your genius is within you. Do they require light to see what you do?" See also Seneca, (Ep. 41.)

Like Socrates, the Stoics connected good morals with their regard to God. Arrian having mentioned the deity says (Lib. ii. cap. 14.) "such as the deity is, such will be those who endeavour to please him. If he be faithful, they will be so. If he be beneficent, they will be so. If he be magnanimous, they will be so." He shews at large the great danger that would not fail to result to society from a general neglect of religion. "Then," says he (Lib. ii. cap. 20.) "justice is nothing, modesty is folly, and the relation of father and son is as nothing."

The constant presence, and assistance, of God was thought by some of the Stoics to be necessary to all good men. "There is no good man," says Seneca (Ep. 41.) "without God. No person can rise above fortune, but as assisted by him. It is he that gives great and exalted councils. God," he says, "removes from good men every evil, all wickedness, evil thoughts, blind lust, avarice," &c. (De Provid. chap. 6.) He did not, however, suppose that the divine guide of each particular person was a deity of the highest rank. For he

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says

says (Ep. 110.) "Every person has a god for his guide, but one of an inferior kind."\*

The union of this intelligent principle, which occasionally descended to the earth to the aid of men, is thus expressed by Seneca (Ep. 41.) "As the rays of the sun reach to the earth, but are still united to their source; so a great and sacred mind, being sent down hither that we may have a nearer view of divine things, converses with us, but adheres to its original."

It is not easy to say what the heathen philosophers and others thought of *fate*, and the relation that the gods bore to it. Sometimes they seem to have thought that they directed fate, at other times that fate was a power independent of them, and that controlled them. Seneca seems to have thought that fate was nothing more than the will of the gods themselves. "The author and governor of all things" he says (Prov. v. cap. 1.) "wrote the fates, but he follows them. He orders, but always obeys. Some things must always please God (Quæst. Nat. Lib. i. præf.) because the best things only please him. Nor is he on this account less free,

*\* Those of this class of deities that attended women were by the heathens called Juno's.*

“ free, or powerful ; for he is his own necessity.  
 “ If this be not the case, it would not be worth  
 “ while to be born.”

It was taken for granted by all the later philosophers, that the gods were incapable of *anger*, as well as all good men ; and the natural consequence of this opinion was that there could be no future punishment for the wicked, which took away a great motive against the commission of vice.

“ The immortal gods,” says Seneca (*De Ira. Lib. ii. c. 27.*) “ neither will any anger, nor can indulge  
 “ in any. Their nature is mild, and placid, as remote from injuring others as themselves. No  
 “ man in his senses” he says (*De Benef. Lib. iv. cap. 19.*) “ fears God, for it is madness to fear  
 “ what is salutary ; nor can any person love what  
 “ he fears. No person is so much a child as to be  
 “ afraid of Cerberus.” And he joins the Epicureans in their contempt of every thing in the infernal regions. (*Ep. 24.*)

It appears from the writings of Arrian, that the common people among the heathens were very religious in their way. “ No person,” he says (*Lib. iii. cap. 21.*) “ leaves a port without sacrificing to  
 “ the gods ; nor do husbandmen sow without in-

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“ voking



"voking Ceres. Would any person who should neglect such duties be safe?"

He must have thought, however, that such rites as these took the place of duties of more importance, when he said (Lib. ii. cap. 7.) "By means of unseasonable divination many duties are neglected." "ed."

## SECTION II.

### *Of the Soul of Man, and its Power.*

We have seen enough, it might be thought, of the consequences which the Stoics drew from their opinion of the derivation of the souls of men from the supreme intelligence, in ascribing to them similar powers, especially that of absolute self-sufficiency, and a total independence on every thing foreign to itself, even, on the body, to which it is, however, necessarily connected at present. But arrogant as is the language of Marcus Antoninus and Epictetus on the subject, it falls short of that of Seneca.

One obvious similarity between God and man is their relation to *matter*. "The place," says Seneca (Ep. 65.) "that God has in the world, the  
"mind

“mind has in man. He works upon matter, and  
 “the mind upon the body.” But he surely could  
 not think that the supreme mind was as necessari-  
 ly attached to the material system as to be affected  
 by every thing that passes in it, as the mind is by  
 the affections of the body ; which, though it may  
 make light of it, has no power to free itself. The  
 union of the soul with the supreme intelligence,  
 notwithstanding its present separation from it, is  
 thus maintained by Seneca. “There is nothing,”  
 he says, (Ep. 92.) “improper in endeavouring to  
 “ascend from whence we came. Why should  
 “we not think there is something divine in a good  
 “man, since he is part of God. The whole sys-  
 “tem is one, and is God. We are his compani-  
 “ons, and members of him.”

To christians, who believe that there is an infi-  
 nite difference between God and man ; and his in-  
 finite superiority to us, notwithstanding our being  
 said to be *made in his image*, and to resemble him  
 in some respects, the language of Seneca respect-  
 ing their equality is truly shocking. “A good  
 “man,” he says, (De Provid. chap. 1. & 2.) “dif-  
 “fers from God only with respect to time. He is his  
 “disciple, his emulator, and true offspring, whom  
 “he educates with severity, to prepare him for

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“him

“himself; but no real evil can befall a good man, “God,” he farther says (Ep. 73.) “is not superior to man in happiness, but only in time; and “virtue is not greater for being of longer continuance.” What he says above of God training up good men to prepare them for himself is a truly fine sentiment, though connected with so much extravagance.

Seneca goes beyond Marcus Antoninus in his boasting of the all sufficiency of the mind of man with respect to happiness, and its independence on every thing foreign to itself. “It is,” he says, (De Consol. ad. Helv. c. 5.) “in the power of every man to make himself happy. With respect to himself,” he says, “I assure you I am not unhappy, (miserum),” and, moreover, that I cannot be so (Ib. c. 4.) If small things cannot affect a wise man, (De Constant. Sap. c. 15.) neither can greater things; if not a few, neither many. I would persuade you never to pity a good man, (De Prov. c. 3.) for though he may seem to be miserable, he cannot be so.”

To many this would seem a difficult attainment, but not so to our author. “What does reason require of man, but the easiest things, (Ep. 41.) “viz. to live according to nature. A wise man is

“no

"no creature of imagination. There are many examples of it, and Cato seems to have exceeded what was required of him." (De Const. Sap. c. 7.

This extraordinary power, it is evident, however, that Arrian restricts to philosophers. "Philosophy," says he, (Lib. ii. cap. 1.) "allows none to be free, but those who have been instructed (*παρασκευασμένοι*) that is, God does not permit it." Again he says, (Lib. ii. cap. 19.) "Shew me a person who is sick and happy, in danger and happy, dying and happy, banished and happy, disgraced and happy, such a one is a Stoic." But, surely, such a one is rather a christian, his source of consolation under the evils mentioned alone, being infinitely superior to any that the Stoics could have recourse to, and accessible to persons of the meanest capacity, such as they could never have adopted, or indeed have understood, viz. the distinction of things within the power of the mind, and things foreign to it, in the sense of the Stoics. As to dying circumstances, there cannot, surely, be a question of the superior happiness of the christian, for reasons obvious enough, and enlarged upon in the preceding section.

"The

The power of the mind over the body is rather more strongly expressed by Arrian than by any other Stoic writer. "My body," he says, (Lib. iii. cap.) 22. "is not me, its parts are nothing to me. Death is nothing to me, let it come when it will." He supposes a dialogue between a tyrant and a philosopher that is truly curious for the extravagance of it. The tyrant says (Lib. i. cap. 1.) "You shall die." The philosopher replies, "but not lamenting. T. You shall be in chains. P. But not whining. T. You shall be banished. P. But what hinders my going laughing. T. Tell me your secrets. P. No, that is in my power. T. But I will throw you into chains. P. What say you, man? You may bind my feet, but Jupiter himself cannot change my resolution. T. I will throw you into prison, and strike off your head. P. And did I ever say that you could not strike it off? T. I will kill you. P. When did I say that I was immortal? "These things," he says, "must be thought of, and meditated upon."

In one place, however, Arrian seems willing to make some allowance for the weakness of human nature, and especially on account of the necessary influence of the body over the mind. "If the  
"pods,"

“gods,” he says, (Lib. i. cap. 1.) “were willing  
 “to grant us the command of the things that are  
 “out of our power, they could not do it. For  
 “while we are upon the earth, and are tied to such  
 “bodies, and such companions, how is it possible:  
 “but that things foreign to us must be an impedi-  
 “ment to us.”

Seneca, whose luxurious and splendid mode of living did but ill correspond with the maxims of his philosophy, and whose flattery of the emperor, whom he must have despised, was fulsome in the extreme, seems disposed to make still more allowance for the weakness of human nature than any other of the Stoics. “I would prefer pleasure,” he says, (Ep. 66.) “to pain if the choice was  
 “proposed to me, because the former is more agreeable to nature, and the latter contrary to it.” But for the very same reason, is not every thing that men call *good* more agreeable to nature, than those that we agree to call *evils*; and how, on this concession, could pleasure and pain be classed among the things that are perfectly indifferent to a philosopher?

When his luxurious life was objected to him, he said, after reciting the particulars of it. “These  
 “things are *apud me*, (in my possession) but at  
 “the

“ the same time they are *extra me*, (foreign to me, “ i. e. to my mind”) (De Vita. beata. cap. 25.) a “ pretty nice, but convenient distinction.” According to him, a more ingenious acknowledgment was made by Plato and Epicurus, when the same objection was made to them. For they said, “ that men should live according to what they “ thought, not as they themselves lived.” (Ib 18.) It is not probable, however, that either of these men would have said this in earnest. Others may have said it for them, as Jesus did of the Scribes and Pharisees.

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### SECTION III.

#### *Of Moral Precepts.*

Arrian has many excellent moral precepts; but as they are similar to those of Marcus Antoninus above recited, they need not be repeated here. Among other things he says, (Lib. ii. cap. 6.) “ Life “ is a thing indifferent, but not so the use of it. “ Difficulties shew who are men. When you “ meet with them (Lib. i. cap. 24.) remember “ that God is making you engage with a rough and “ expert antagonist.”

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As the Stoics made no allowance for the indulgence of any *passion*, or *emotion*, which they referred to mere animal nature, they equally condemned *anger* and *compassion*. "Anger," says Seneca (De Ira ii. cap. 14.) "is never to be indulged, but only the appearance of it to excite others as a spur to a horse. A good man (Ib. 6.) is incapable of inflicting punishment; but anger is a punishment, and therefore anger is not natural." On this subject, as well as on every other how much more natural is the doctrine of the scriptures, which aims not at the extirpations of any of our passions, but only at the due regulation of them. *Be ye angry, but sin not. Let not the sun go down upon your wrath.* "Compassion," he says (Clem. ii. cap. 4.) "is a vice of the mind, in the view of the miseries of others. A wise man will relieve a person that weeps, but he will not weep with him (cap. 6.) He will relieve the distressed, but without feeling compassion."

On the subject of *self murder* Arrian seems to be inconsistent. "God," he says (Lib. i. cap. 29.) "requires such a world as this, and those that are in it. If he order a retreat, as in the case of Socrates, we should yield obedience, as to a commander"



THE  
PHILOSOPHY  
of  
EPICURUS.

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INTRODUCTION.

THE only sect of Grecian philosophy that remains to be considered, as coming within my object, of a comparison of them with the system of revelation, is that of *Epicurus* which arose presently after that of the Stoics, to which it was, in many respects, opposite and hostile; the one being remarkable for its austerity, and the other for its ease in the conduct of life; the one for a belief in a divine providence, as superintending every thing in the world, and the other for the utter neglect and contempt of religion in every form. There was also another source of opposition and hostility between the two. All the philosophers who had preceded Epicurus, the Stoics among the rest, had deserted the plain maxims of Socrates, and spent the

the greatest part of their time on Logic and Metaphysics, of no use whatever in the conduct of life; whereas Epicurus, following the steps of their common master, held all their subtle disputations on these subjects in the greatest contempt, and made the true enjoyment of life the great object of his philosophy. And considering that the great doctrine of a future state was in fact excluded from all their systems, there was more of reason and good sense in the maxims of Epicurus than in theirs; especially as, though he maintained that pleasure was the great end of life, he did not, as we shall see, mean sensual pleasure, but the happiness of man upon the whole, in which temperance, and every virtue, was an essential ingredient.

Epicurus also differed from other philosophers in the circumstances of his teaching, more resembling a society of friends, than that of master and scholars. Their meetings were held in a private garden of his own; and the friendship of this fraternity Cicero spake of in the highest terms. (Acad. Lib. 20.) though they had not every thing in common, like the disciples of Pythagoras.

Though we have no proper *treatise* of Epicurus, we have several of his *letters* preserved by Diogenes Laertius, especially one to Herodotus, in

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which

which he professes to give an outline of his principles. And the poem of Lucretius contains a developement of the whole of his philosophy. From these it is easy to form a very complete idea of his tenets; and from these, and some of his sayings quoted by Seneca, the following account is given.

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### SECTION I.

#### *Of God and of the Structure of the Universe.*

Epicurus's triumph over religion in all its forms, and thereby delivering men from the fear of death, was the great boast of all his followers, this victory (Lucretius, says Lib. i. V. 78.) has raised men from earth to heaven, and by this means he has conferred greater benefit on mankind than Ceres in giving them bread, or Bacchus in giving them wine (Ib, Lib. v. V. 15.) Religion he considered as having done unspeakable mischief to mankind, and in particular instances the sacrifice of Iphigenia, the daughter of Agamemnon to Diana, of which he gives a very affecting description. (Lucret. Lib. i. V. 85.)

Epicurus did not, however deny the existence of gods, and though this is commonly thought to have

have been only with a view to his safety ; since by an open profession of atheism he would have been exposed to the rigour of the Athenian laws, I think he might have been very sincere in that opinion ; thinking, with all other philosophers, that every part of the universe was replete with inhabitants, suited to their natures, the gods occupying the higher regions, demons the middle, and men the earth. What he openly maintained was that, tho' there are gods they take no thought about the affairs of this world. " The gods," he says (Diog. Laert. pag. 785.) " are immortal and happy beings \*\*\* but not such as the vulgar opinion makes them to be ;" and having said that happiness is two fold, he adds that " supreme happiness is that of the gods which admits of no addition." (Ib 783-4.)

The reason that he gives for this opinion is, that happiness could not consist with the trouble and care which he thought must attend the government of the world, though he seems to have thought that they had something to do in the upper regions, which are nearest to them. Speaking of the motions, and other properties of meteors, he says (Ib. 755.) " They are not directed by any thing besides the order and appointment of him  
" who

“ who has all happiness and immortality. For it  
 “ is inconsistent with happiness to have business,  
 “ and cares, or to be affected by anger, or favour,  
 “ These belong to beings subject to infirmity, and  
 “ fear, who stand in need of others.” Again he  
 says, (Ib. 735.) “ Whoever is happy, and immor-  
 “ tal, neither has any troublesome business him-  
 “ self, nor gives trouble to others ; and in conse-  
 “ quence of this he is neither moved by anger  
 “ or favour.”

As to the charge of impiety he says, (Ib. 786.)  
 “ he is not guilty of impiety who takes from the  
 “ multiplicity of Gods, but he who adopts the opi-  
 “ nion of the multitude concerning them,” Lu-  
 cretius ascribes the origin, and the frightful effects  
 of religion upon the human mind, in part to what  
 people see, or imagine they see, in dreams, as well  
 as to the regular course of the heavenly bodies,  
 and to the terror excited by storms, thunder, light-  
 ening, earthquakes, &c. For seeing no cause  
 of these things, men ascribe them to some un-  
 known invisible beings, whose power was great,  
 and tremendous. (Lucret. Lib. v. V. 1165. &c.

Considering the vulgar superstition. and the  
 serious effects of it in human sacrifices. prostituti-

ons

ons in religious rites, divination, and its destructing influence in the common business of life, it may well be questioned whether it was not wiser, with Epicurus, to reject it altogether, than to retain it in any form or degree. Nay I doubt not but the system of Polytheism and Idolatry took more from the happiness of mankind than either Epicurus or Lucretius suspected. Epicurus, however, well knew that none of the philosophers maintained the vulgar opinions, but much more honourable ideas of the divinity and the government of the world, opinions highly pleasing to good men, and perhaps some restraint upon the wicked; and we shall see that his ideas of the government of the world, and the direction of it, which differed exceedingly from those of other philosophers, were absurd in the extreme, in supposing that there was no wisdom, design, or a regard to final causes, in things that most of all required them.

The Atomical system, which was opposed to that of Plato, and most other philosophers, who held that the world was formed by an intelligent principle, out of pre-existent matter, and that it was finite, was first suggested by Democritus, but adopted by Epicurus. He maintained that there was no wisdom employed in the arrangement of

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any

any part of the system, but that it arose from the fortuitous concourse of atoms, moving at random in all directions. "These atoms" he says, (Diog. Laert. p. 741.) "have no properties besides those of figure, gravity and magnitude; but being perfectly hard, though of different forms, they are incapable of destruction, or change." The construction of the world, according to Lucretius, is too faulty to have arisen from a principle of intelligence and design. (Lucret. Lib. ii. V. 180.)

The universe having come into existence from these materials, "it must." Epicurus says (Ib. 733.) "be infinite. For had there been any bounds to it, the parts of which it consists would have been dispersed into infinite space; having no place to fix in, and nothing to stop their motion," moreover, since the giving these floating atoms every chance for their fortunate meeting, so as to form such a complete system as this, must have required almost infinite time before it could have taken place, he maintained, contrary to the opinion of many other philosophers that "the world had a beginning, and will have an end. (Lib. v. V. 245.) Since the continual contention, and disposition to motion, in the elements of which it consists will in course of time effect its compleat dissolution

solution. He even thought there were already evident signs of a tendency to decay and dissolution in the earth, and that there has been a great degeneracy in all its productions, animals being now of less size and strength than they were formerly, and all the products of the earth requiring the labour of man which they did not originally, when every thing for the use of man was produced by it spontaneously (Lucret. Lib. ii. V. 1150. and 1170.) so that in time every thing will probably decline more and more, and the whole go to decay and ruin. But since nothing could be formed out of nothing, the atoms of which it consists can only be dispersed to form other systems, and can never be annihilated (Lucret. Lib. i. V. 150. & 216.) But before this event takes place Epicurus maintained that, with the exception of the gradual decay mentioned above, "every thing is now as it ever has been, and will continue to be; since there is nothing into which it can be changed, and no superior power to make a change in it. (Diog. Laert. p. 732.)

In the same manner as this world was formed, viz. by the random concourse of atoms, since the universe has no bounds, "other worlds," Epicurus says (Diog. Laert. p. 735. and 736.) "have,

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"no



“no doubt been formed in the same manner; and  
“there is no reason why there may not be an in-  
“finity of them, similar or dissimilar to this.  
“For the atoms of which they are composed are  
“infinite, and carried to the greatest distances.”

Such wild and absurd schemes, altogether unworthy of examination or refutation, may the most ingenious of men be led to form for want of attention to a few fundamental principles, and those of the most obvious nature. For what can be more evident than that there are infinite marks of design, and what we call contrivance, in the structure of the world, and of every plant and animal in it. Epicurus must have maintained that the eye was not formed for seeing, nor the ear for hearing; but that being so formed, by this fortuitous concourse of atoms, they were found to be capable of these particular uses. Other philosophers, however, were not backward to acknowledge the reality of final causes, and consequently of design in the structure of the world, and of every part of it, and it is certainly unspeakably more satisfactory to acknowledge, than to deny, this. We have then some superior intelligence to look to, as a being to whom this world, and ourselves as a part of it, belong; and who will take some care of what  
with

with such exquisite skill, he has planned and executed.

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## SECTION II.

### *Of the Human Soul.*

Since, according to Epicurus, every thing is in a perpetual flux, through the constant tendency to motion in its primary atoms, it could not be supposed that he would, with many other philosophers, maintain either the *pre-existence*, or the *immortality* of the soul. Accordingly he denies, and even ridicules, them both; using however one just argument, though he was little aware of the real nature or extent of it, viz. "All thought arises from the impression made on the bodily senses," (Diog. Laert. p. 727.) thinking it to follow from this, that the soul, on which the impressions were made, was equally corporeal with the objects from which they came.

His principal argument, however, is that there is nothing in nature besides *body* and *space*, in which bodies can be placed, and moved. "There is nothing," he says (Ib. 732) "but what can be handled," or become the object of our senses.

ses.” “We cannot even form an idea of any thing else. Nothing,” he says, (Ib. 749.) “is incorporeal,” (which all other philosophers held the soul to be) “besides a *vacuum*, which only affords room for bodies to move in.” He adds “they who say that the soul is incorporeal talk foolishly. (ματαιαζουσιν)”

The soul, then, being corporeal, must be a part of the body, as much as the hands or the feet (Lucret. Lib. iii. v. 95.) each having their several functions; and as the soul had no pre-existence, it must have been produced at the same time with the body, grow up, and decay, with it. (Lucret. Lib. iii. v. 455.) Being a body, it must consist of particles of some particular kind or form, and “those that constitute the soul,” he says, (Diog. Laert. p. 747.) “are the smallest and roundest of all; but they must be dispersed when the body dies, as every other part of it is.” (Ib. 748.)

It is difficult to form any clear or consistent idea of Epicurus’s opinion concerning the different parts of the soul, of their several functions, and place in the body. In his letter to Herodotus he mentions only two parts, one that has reason, and another that is destitute of it. “The rational  
“ part,”

part," he says (Ib. 748.) "resides in the breast,  
as is manifest from the passions of fear and joy."

But, according to Lucretius, there are three, or even four parts in the soul; and yet when he speaks of three parts, he mentions only the *Animus* and the *Anima*; but the third seems to be the *breath* which leaves us when we die. (Lucret. Lib. iii. V. 231. to 245.) Afterwards, however, he says that these three parts are not sufficient, but that "a fourth which has no name must be added, and this is the cause of universal sensation; though, like the other parts, it consists of the smallest particles of matter." (Lucret. Lib. iii. V. 236.) That *heat* enters into the composition of the soul, appears, he says, (Lucret. Lib. iii. V. 290.) when we are angry, and in the habits of fierce animals, as lions, &c. and that *air* is another part of it, appears when we are cool and serene, and in the cold dispositions of the deer, and tame animals.

Since the soul, according to Epicurus, is not immortal, death must be the extinction of our being; and the dread of this is represented by him and Lucretius as the greatest of all evils, and what most of all tends to embitter human life, as it must to those who have any enjoyment of it, and have nothing

nothing to look to beyond it. "Take a young man," he says, as he is quoted by Seneca (Ep. 22.) "an old man, or one of middle age, you will find them equally afraid of dying, though equally ignorant of life." In order to relieve the mind from this terror, he says with other philosophers, (Ib. 786.) "Accustom yourself to think that death is nothing to us. For both good and evil consist in sensation, and death is a privation of all sense." Again he says, (Ib. 786.) "death, the most dreadful of all evils, is nothing to us; because while we live death is not present, and when death comes we are not." This poor witicism is not, however, calculated to give much consolation to a man who is sensible of the approach of death, and who is unwilling to part with life.

There are two sentences of Epicurus concerning death, preserved by Seneca, which have more of good sense in them. "It is," he says (Ep 24.) "ridiculous to fly to death through a wearisomeness of life, after living in such a manner as that death is the only and the last resource." Again (Ep. 26.) "Think whether it is more desirable for death to come to us, or for us to go to it; that is, since death will come, it is better to meet  
" it

"it cheerfully." But in vain are all the topics of consolation against the fear of death to men who love life, and yet have no hope of surviving the grave, and this hope is nowhere given but in revelation.

### SECTION III.

#### *Of Human Life and Happiness.*

Admitting what, in fact, all the Grecian philosophers did, viz. that there is no future state, the maxims of Epicurus respecting this life, and the proper objects of choice in it, are far more reasonable than those of any of the other sects. Since (as he insinuates) there is no life beyond this, "It is," he says (Diog. Laert. p. 758.) "our business to make the most of the things that are present, and exclude all causes of anxiety. The end of all," he says, (Ib. 788.) "is to live well, and happily. For we do every thing to avoid grief and perturbation." He therefore adds, (Ib. 789.) that "pleasure is the end and object of life, but not all kinds of pleasure. For some we decline because they are all attended with more pain, and some pains we choose for the sake  
" of

“ of the pleasures that follow them. Perturbati-  
 “ on,” he says, (Ib. 758.) “ is incident to men in  
 “ this life, especially to those who dread what, ac-  
 “ cording to fabulous accounts, we may meet with  
 “ after death, as if there was any thing after death.  
 “ But by living without perturbation we live,” he  
 says, (Ib. 759.) “ as gods among men.” For  
 this we have seen to be his idea of the state of the  
 gods.

It is probable that Epicurus was led by natural  
 inclination to a quiet unambitious life. This he  
 thought to be most favourable to the true enjoy-  
 ment of it, and therefore he recommended it to o-  
 thers, and advised them to avoid whatever might  
 interfere with it. “ A wise man,” he says (Ib.  
 782.) “ will marry and have children, but he will  
 “ have no concern in public affairs.” This was  
 probably to avoid every jealousy and opposition,  
 with all the unpleasant consequences of them, un-  
 avoidable to men in public life. For it could not  
 be from idleness, in a man who wrote so many  
 books, and who employed so much of his time in  
 the instruction of others. From a similar motive  
 he might say, (Ib. 784.) “ A wise man will make  
 “ use of poems, but will not compose any him-  
 “ self.” Agreeably to this he says, (Ib. 761.)  
 “ the

“the happiness of life does not require vanity, or  
“vain glory,” which he might think to be particularly conspicuous in poets, “but in tranquility  
“and security.”

In order to secure his favourite tranquility, he recommended the practice of universal virtue; and according to all accounts, his own life was without reproach in this respect. “The virtues,” he says, (Ib. 795.) “are chosen for the sake of pleasure, “and not on their own account;” which is true when properly explained. For when the two are compared, happiness appears to be the *end*, and virtue the *means*, though the necessary means, to attain it.

He justly represents the chief cause of perturbation, and consequently of unhappiness in general, to be wrong dispositions of mind, which he says it is the business of philosophy to correct. “What  
“men suffer,” he says, (Ib. 781.) “from hatred, “envy or contempt, a man may overcome by reason; and he who has once been wise will not  
“acquire different habits, or yield to any cause of  
“perturbation, or to any thing else that may retard  
“his progress in knowledge. A wise man,” he says, (Ib. 784.) “will not be affected if another be

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“said



“ said to be wiser than he.” On this account he recommends an application to philosophy at all times of life. “ If any person say it is too soon or too late to apply to philosophy, it is, he says, the same thing as if he said it is too late or too soon to be happy.” (Ib. 785.)

The life of Epicurus was according to all accounts conformable to his precepts; and so far was he or his disciples from habits of self-indulgence, that no persons lived more abstemiously, on the plainest food, and drinking little besides water. (Ib. 713.) What he himself says on this subject, (Ib. 790.) is particularly deserving of attention.

We consider frugality,” he says, “ as a great good, not that we should always live sparingly, but that when we cannot do otherwise, we may be satisfied with a little, and have a greater enjoyment of abundance when we have it. Plain bread and water give the greatest pleasure when they are wanted; and to accustom ones’self to plain food, not exquisitely prepared, contri-  
butes both to health and activity for all the purposes of life, and makes us not to dread bad fortune. When, therefore, we say that pleasure is the end of life, it is not the pleasure of the luxurious and the spendthrift, which consists in eating  
“ing

“ing and drinking to excess, which come, through  
 “ignorance or perverseness, say that we maintain,  
 “but to be free from pain of body and to enjoy  
 “tranquility of mind, free from all perturbation.  
 “There is no living pleasantly but by living pru-  
 “dently, honorably, and justly. For the virtues  
 “are connected with a delightful and pleasant life,  
 “and cannot be separated from them.” Epicu-  
 rus must have been of a pleasant, social, and bene-  
 volent turn of mind, to have attached so many per-  
 sons to him as is universally acknowledged that he  
 did. He says, (Ib. 801.) “the most valuable  
 “thing in life is the acquisition of friendship.”

I shall conclude this article with some valuable  
 sayings of Epicurus, quoted by Seneca. “If you  
 “live according to nature, you will never be poor,  
 “but if you live according to the opinion of others,  
 “you will never be rich (Ep. 10.) The man  
 “who lives upon bread and water can never be  
 “poor; and he who can confine his desires to  
 “this, may vie with Jupiter for happiness (Ep. 25.)  
 “First consider with whom you eat and drink;  
 “and then what you eat and drink (Ep. 19.) They  
 “live ill who are always beginning to live.”  
 (Ep. 23.)

Thus we have seen that, at the commencement

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of



of our enquiry, all the more intelligent Greeks retained the belief of the existence of one Supreme Being, the maker of the world, and of all things in it, though aided by a multiplicity of inferior ones in the government of it: of the constant attention of this great Being to all human affairs, of his love of virtue, and abhorrence of vice, and of such an administration of the world, as that the wicked will generally meet with their due punishment, and the virtuous with their proper reward; that the souls of all men are immortal, and will be more fully rewarded or punished, according to their deserts, in a future state. But as we have advanced, we have found these principles and motives of moral conduct grow more obscure, till at last they entirely vanished; other principles, utterly inconsistent with them, being generally received; as that of the derivation of all human souls from the substance of the Supreme Being, and their final absorption into the same source again, all individual consciousness being thereby lost. The last of these sects, viz. that of the Epicureans, who discover more good sense, and consistency in other respects, disclaimed all belief of wisdom and design in the construction of the universe, and of the providence of God in any of the affairs of men at this time

time, too, the last period of heathen philosophy, all the sects, without exception, had abandoned the belief of a future state of any kind. And yet, with respect to mental ability, the founders of these sects may be classed among the first of the human race, sagacious, thoughtful, and laborious, in the extreme. What prospect was there, then, of the world ever becoming more enlightened by human wisdom, and the experiment was continued a sufficient length of time, from Pythagoras to Marcus Antoninus, a space of about seven hundred years.

But what men could not do for themselves, it pleased God to do for them; and after giving much light to one particular nation, *in the fulness of time* he sent Jesus Christ, with abundant evidence of a divine mission to be the light of the whole world. His doctrine, in a reasonable time, through the instrumentality of men, to appearance the least qualified for the undertaking, and in spite of all opposition from power, from prejudice, and from heathen philosophy, established itself, to the utter overthrow of all preceeding religions, which having been maintained from time immemorial, and thought to be connected with the well being of every state, had ever been held the most sacred.

cred. At present no doubt is entertained by any christian of the being or providence of God in this state, or of a righteous retribution in another ; so that nothing is wanting, no *principle* or *motive*, whatever, to the virtue and happiness of man, but his receiving this divine light, and living according to it.

THE END.



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